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ABSTRACT

A selection of essays on foreign language planning at the national level contains articles on the language planning process, language choice, teacher education, testing and assessment, and transnational planning. Essays include the following: "Foreign Language Teaching Policy: Some Planning Issues" (Theo J. M. van Els); "Foreign Language Planning in the United States" (Richard D. Lambert); "Communication, Foreign Languages, and Foreign Language Policy" (Kari Sajavaara); "Language Policy and Language Teaching in Finland" (Sauli Takala); "Problems in the Implementation of Foreign Language Policy in Finland" (Marja-Liisa Karppinen); "Languages and Policy in Estonia" (Urve Laanemets); Human Rights and Foreign Languages" (Robert Phillipson); "Language Choice and Its Impact: The Sociocultural Factor in Language Education Strategies" (Elisabetta Zuanelli Sonino); "Less Commonly Taught Languages in the United States: Needs, Capacities, and Strategies for Development" (Richard D. Brecht, A. Ronald Walton); "Teacher Education and National Foreign Language Policies" (Gerald Westhoff); "Foreign Language Policy, Pedagogy, and Practice: An American Perspective" (Diane W. Birckbichler); "Transparency, Coherence, and Washback in Language Assessment" (Brian North); "Testing and Examinations in a National Foreign Language Policy" (Bernard Spolsky); and "The Integration of European and National Foreign Language Policies: The European Community's LINGUA Program" (Antony Shaw). (MSE)

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NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE PLANNING: PRACTICES AND PROSPECTS

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NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE PLANNING: PRACTICES AND PROSPECTS

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INTRODUCTION

Richard D. Lambert and Kari Sajavaara

On August 10–12, 1992, representatives of fourteen countries, and of the Council of Europe, the European Community, and the Nordic Council, met in Jyväskylä, Finland, to discuss recent developments in language planning in Europe and in the United States. The conference, co-chaired by Kari Sajavaara and Richard D. Lambert and jointly sponsored by the University of Jyväskylä and the National Foreign Language Center at the Johns Hopkins University, provided an opportunity for comparison across countries and continents of the domains, directions, and processes of language planning. It was noted that there was no regular mechanism for sharing information and experience on language planning among the countries of Europe or across the Atlantic, and that the conference was a step toward enhancing such dialogue.

THE CONTENT OF THE CONFERENCE

The papers that follow comprise a selection of those presented at the Jyväskylä conference as amended on the basis of the discussion that took place there. They provide both a sense of national differences in the contexts in which language planning is carried out and an in-depth analysis of particular substantive domains relating to language planning: language choice, teacher training, and assessment.

The Planning Process

Theo van Els, the principal author of the new comprehensive Dutch National Program, used his experience in the development of that plan to describe some of the principal elements in the process of language planning: assessing needs, centralizing decision making, interrelating overall planning and curricular change, involving teachers in the planning and implementation process, and serving different student clienteles, particularly those with academic vs. occupational orientations.

Richard Lambert commented on the relative lack of and distaste for centralized language planning in the United States. However, he pointed out that there is a great deal of fragmented, de facto language planning taking place through targeted funding programs of the national government and through administrative fiat of various state governments. As examples, he described attempts to extend instruction to the non-

European languages; to expand student enrollments and provide greater articulation among the various educational levels; and to develop a common metric for measuring language competency.

Kari Sajavaara began with a discussion of the goals of language use and language planning with special reference to Finland. He commented on the relevance of various psychological factors to foreign language use and learning. In particular, he dealt with Finnish national character and the indigenous cultural valuation of foreign language use. He also discussed a number of issues specific to foreign language learning in Finland, including the effects of relative linguistic homogeneity, the switch from elite to comprehensive education for all, and a shift in the definition of what constitutes foreign language competency.

Sauli Takala described the architecture of the Finnish foreign language educational system and the history of language planning in that country, and reported the results of a number of attitudinal studies on which language planning was based.

Marja-Liisa Karppinen, also writing about Finland, described the official planning process, the role of general school reform, and the crucial importance of materials preparation and teacher training.

Urve Läänemets presented some of the history of language planning in Estonia and listed issues that must be considered in carrying out effective language policy.

Language Choice

Each of the above authors also dealt tangentially with the often politically complex question of which languages to teach. Van Els described the deliberate process in the Netherlands of essentially narrowing and prioritizing language choice at the secondary level. Lambert wrote of the series of efforts to dilute the overwhelming tradition in the United States of concentrating language instruction on Spanish, French, and German. Sajavaara characterized the effect of the relative linguistic homogeneity of Finland, except for a few fringe languages such as Lappish and Romany. Takala described the language-specific qualitative and quantitative targets set by national policymakers in Finland differentiated by size of community and level of schooling. Karppinen discussed the official policy of requiring the study of Swedish in Finland. Läänemets reported on the partial displacement of Russian as the most favored language in Estonia and the rise of English.

In several of the papers, however, language choice was the primary focus of the discussion. Robert Phillipson was concerned with the blighting effect of linguistic hierarchies; the impact of the deliberate linguistic export policies of countries where world languages are spoken; and the importance of maintaining linguistic human rights for minority populations that will enable them to maintain their distinctive cultural identities.

Elisabetta Zuanelli Sonino carried the argument further in stressing the principle of the right to mother-tongue education for linguistic minorities.

Richard Brecht and Ronald Walton described the current organization in the United States of instruction in the various less commonly taught languages and suggested policy strategies that would diffuse and improve that instruction.

Teacher Education

While questions about teacher training arose in many of the papers, it was the special focus of two papers. Based on his experience in the Netherlands, Gerard Westhoff sketched in the architecture of the Dutch educational system and argued for the centrality of teacher training in the implementation of planned change. He stressed the need for sequencing teacher training, for intermingling theory and practice, for providing repetitive training periods spread over teaching careers, for the special contribution that university-connected teacher-training programs provide, and for the essentiality of periodic assessment.

Diane Birckbichler placed teacher training within the more general pattern of dispersed language policymaking in the United States. She was especially concerned with the recruitment and certification of teachers, the use of distance education as a vehicle for training, and the role of teachers in the establishment of proficiency standards.

Testing and Assessment

While the role of testing and assessment came up occasionally in other papers, it was of central concern in two papers. Brian North reviewed the trend toward coalescence among assessment practices in various European countries. He reviewed some of the current efforts undertaken through the Council of Europe to create a common European framework for characterizing foreign language competency. He examined a series of issues relating to what to measure, how to measure, and how to report the results of language testing.

Bernard Spolsky was more concerned with the general policy issues raised by the administration of objective tests, the problems arising in the search for quantifiable competency scales, and the uneasy relationship of testing to policy.

Transnational Planning

Two organizations in Europe provide mechanisms for overarching planning that transcends national boundaries. Tony Shaw, of the LINGUA Program of the European Community, reported on the EC's current activities in foreign language development. He stressed LINGUA's strong tradition of subsidiarity—that is, the tradition that the

EC will be involved only in activities that member states cannot or will not undertake on their own, and that the EC mandate in foreign language policy extends only where a clear "value added" can be shown for LINGUA programs. Within these constraints the LINGUA Program provides support for (1) the improvement of teacher training, especially newly established opportunities for training abroad; (2) the provision of vocationally oriented language training both for learners who are already employed and for those who are receiving training; and (3) the creation of language consortia, particularly ones that cross national boundaries.

While Denis Girard, formerly with the Council of Europe, did not provide a written paper, he did summarize orally the history of the council's leadership, since the 1960s, in language planning and reform.

TRANSATLANTIC LESSONS FOR PLANNING

One unanticipated benefit of the dialogue at the conference was the identification of domains of language policy in which the Europeans and Americans had depth of experience that might provide useful guidance for future planning.

While there is a great deal of variation among countries in Europe in the following characteristics, the United States has much to learn from the experience of many European countries in the following domains:

1. traditions of more centralized, more integrated, more comprehensive language planning
2. teaching foreign languages in a context rich in extramural use of those languages
3. teaching students several foreign languages at the same time
4. centrally controlled and rationalized teacher training, curricular planning, materials preparation, and testing
5. organization and quality control of the informal, non-school-based language instructional system
6. deliberate policies to influence the choice of languages to be taught and taken by students
7. managing language-learning sequences spread over many years and levels
8. differentiating requirements and instructional practices for students with different career tracks

9. providing instruction for students at the upper skill levels
10. teaching languages at the elementary school level
11. management of complex, differentiated language requirements
12. a richer variety of testing strategies and scales for certifying language competency

American experience, in turn, may be of possible use in European planning in the following domains:

1. coordination of language instruction in systems where authority and decision making are extremely dispersed
2. in a totally fragmented, largely ad hoc planning environment, the encouragement of greater individual experimentation and innovation in teaching strategies and materials
3. use of targeted funding and experimental pilot projects as marginal investment strategies in advancing foreign language instruction
4. deliberate use of foreign study to teach languages both to those who are and those who are not heading for a language-teaching career
5. varied and extensive experience with the uses and limitations of study requirements to motivate language study
6. a highly developed and extensive system of instruction in the non-European languages
7. conduct of skill-oriented language instruction on college and university campuses
8. experimentation with immersion programs
9. development of a wide variety of courses and materials for use in teaching future business employees and professionals

SECTION I

THE PLANNING PROCESS

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING POLICY: SOME PLANNING ISSUES

Theo J. M. van Els
University of Nijmegen

INTRODUCTION

A policy for foreign languages is not quite the same as a policy for foreign language teaching (FLT). The distinction between the two is self-evident and easy to understand, but it is not always made when it should be. And neither is to be mistaken for a (national) language(s) policy. Proposals pertaining to a national foreign languages policy have recently been drawn up in the Netherlands (see Van Els and Van Hest 1992; see also Oud-de Glas et al. 1993), where they have been positively received by the government, and Australia has recently taken political decisions on a national policy on languages (see Lo Bianco 1987). In this paper I will restrict myself to the planning issues one may come up against when devising FLT policies.

I have interpreted the task that I was given for my contribution to the conference program in the following way. Of the four questions phrased there concerning, respectively, "characteristics of a sound planning process," "criteria for (de)centralization," "impact of foreign language policies on curricula," and "economics of foreign language policies," I look upon the latter three as forming part of the many specific questions that have to be answered when spelling out a fully exhaustive reply to the first question. I have, however, no intention of being exhaustive in any way. I will focus on a number of issues that I think have special relevance for the discussions at this conference, both when first outlining some characteristics of what I consider to be a sound planning process, and when, following that, attempting to put forward suggestions regarding the three subquestions.

The interpretation I have given to my task and the selection of points to be dealt with have a great deal to do with the background from which I am taking part in this conference. Let me just briefly indicate here what that background is. In 1989 I was commissioned by the Dutch minister of education to draw up a National Action Program for Foreign Languages in the Netherlands, in cooperation with a working group. The program, basically consisting of some forty recommendations concerning measures of all kinds relating to all sectors of FLT, was completed in early 1990. In the official standpoint of the Dutch government, which was brought out in June 1991, an important role in the implementation of the recommendations is set aside for a central task force. I have been appointed head of that task force. The group was installed officially by the minister of education in June of 1992. We are to complete our assignment by the end of 1995.

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOUND PLANNING PROCESS

I do not mean to unfold a general theory of policy planning. I would not be qualified to do so in the first place, and such an undertaking would also be outside the scope of this paper. Let me just briefly summarize some basic principles one finds represented in the literature (e.g. Nelissen et al. 1986). Policies strive to achieve well-defined objectives, with well-defined means and within a particular time span—this is a definition one finds cited regularly. Usually a further qualification is added, namely, the requirement that the actors in question must try to achieve their objectives in a conscious, purposeful, and rational way.

For the planning process to be sound, a number of rules have to be adhered to when exploring policy problems. The rules may be represented as steps to be taken in the process. Nelissen et al. (1986) enumerate, and expand upon, ten such steps. These are, briefly:

- examine the policy problem in question
- analyze its social context
- analyze the history of policies relating to the problem
- analyze the policy objectives relating to the problem
- analyze the policy strategies that have been chosen to tackle the problem
- make an inventory of the policy means that are being used to tackle the problem
- analyze the way in which policies so far have been decided upon
- describe the way in which policies are being implemented
- give an outline of the effects and results that policies are having
- examine how much evaluation of the present policy has taken place and what it has yielded

There is no need to build up an extensive argument in defense of these ten steps against other such systematic approaches to the planning process. Other systems can easily be thought of, or alternative formulations of the various steps of the above system may well be in order. The essential thing is that the central points that have to be considered in policy planning have found a place in the proposed ten steps. The central points I have in mind are the nature of the policy problem and its social context; numbers and kinds of possible policy objectives, strategies, and means; the ways to reach policy decisions; and, finally, policy implementation and the actual effects and results of policy.

With respect to planning for FLT, I will return to a number of these central points when dealing with the three subquestions in the following paragraphs. The issue of centralization versus decentralization, for example, clearly forms part of a discussion of the various ways there are to reach policy decisions. The possible impact of national FLT policies upon curricula falls under the heading of "actual policy effects and results," as does the "economics" issue. What I propose to do at this stage is to deal briefly with one or two additional aspects of FLT policy planning for each of the central points mentioned.

1.1. The Nature of the Policy Problem

These days, when a change is proposed in the provisions for FLT—be it the teaching of an additional foreign language in secondary schools or making the learning of one or two foreign languages obligatory for everyone—there is usually a reference to a change in the pattern of needs for foreign languages felt in society. And the needs one is invariably thinking of nowadays relate to actual competence in the foreign languages. The increasing internationalization of our societies has led to a growing demand for communicative skills in more and more foreign languages, felt by more and more people.

However, as I have pointed out before (see, among others, Van Els and Extra 1987, p. 102), a proper analysis of the needs argument brings to light that there are not only the communicative needs just mentioned to be thought of, but also at least two other categories of needs that may have to be catered to in FLT. The first of these I have called the "language-proficiency-related needs," as for example bringing people into contact with other nations and cultures—which may be achieved most directly by learning the language in question itself, of course, but "such familiarity can also be acquired through channels other than the language in which that culture is embedded." The other category includes those needs that are "hardly if at all related to language proficiency." Thus, for example, it has often been suggested that the learning of foreign languages may engender "logical thinking," an intellectual skill worth pursuing as one of the general educational objectives, which, however, may also be achieved through other subjects.

It is essential to make this distinction between categories of needs, because the three categories may, and usually do, carry different weights under different social circumstances when decisions as to FLT provisions have to be taken. Thus, on the basis of the third category of arguments, all foreign languages may lay equal claim to a place in the curriculum of secondary schools, but the claims may vary considerably between languages, when a proper assessment of the needs of the first category is brought into play.

In a similar vein I have also repeatedly pointed out that there are other factors besides the needs factor that have to be taken into consideration when the policy problem is analyzed with a view to defining a new policy for FLT (see again, among others, Van Els and Extra 1987, pp. 103–4). Three such factors are the psychological factor (e.g. the optimal age at which to start the learning of a foreign language), the linguistic factor (e.g. the availability of adequate linguistic descriptions of the language or languages to be taught), and the educational factor (e.g. the availability of qualified teachers).

1.2. Objectives, Strategies, and Means

The second central point concerns numbers and kinds of possible objectives, strategies, and means. Let me mention briefly two points here that to me seem to be of utmost importance in a "sound planning process." The first has to do with objectives, the second with strategies.

A major problem is to know how specific are to be the terms in which objectives must be formulated. With FLT objectives there are at least two problems. The one is the more general theoretical problem of how to define foreign language competence at all adequately. There seems to be general agreement that a description of language proficiency in terms of categories and numbers of words and morphological features is inadequate, and that the preferred way should be one in terms of notional-functional categories, starting from language use situations. However, the degree of specificity that may be achieved in this way is still a moot point.

The other problem is of an educational nature. When I said that specificity of objectives is a major problem, I was also thinking of the restraints that society may impose in this respect. I will return to this when discussing the issue of centralization.

The second point of utmost importance concerns the scope of the planning activity. When developing an FLT policy these days, it will not do anymore to pay attention only to one or two sectors of FLT. It was not uncommon in the Netherlands to look exclusively to general education when a solution had to be found for a particular foreign language need not yet catered to in the educational system. The new policy proposals we have drawn up were meant to be "all-encompassing," in the sense that they take into consideration not only all sectors in which foreign languages are, or may be, taught (inclusive of private language institutes, therefore), but also all situations in which competence of foreign languages happens "to occur" (the native competence in other languages of immigrants is taken to be an asset the country can make use of). The message is that we should stop planning for one particular foreign language only, or for one particular sector of the educational system, or for one particular group of the population (see also Christ 1991, pp. 66ff.).

1.3. Ways to Reach Policy Decisions

The reason for highlighting "ways to reach decisions" lies in the fact that the effectiveness of any new policy in the domain of FLT depends largely on those who play a central role in carrying it out—that is, the teachers. To what extent, therefore, should teachers be drawn into the planning process? Should they be the initiators of new policies? Should they be consulted during the course of the planning process? Or, possibly, should their consent be sought with each new proposal for a change of policy? I will not attempt to answer these questions in this paper, assuming that the subject will be dealt with by others.

But let me go into one particular point relating to the role of the teaching profession in the planning process. The point is that when defining a role for the profession, it should never be forgotten that teachers as a group have interests of their own—interests that at times may well run counter to the new goals one hopes to achieve by proposing changes to the existing FLT policy. Almost every such change presupposes an adaptation of the prevailing classroom procedures, which in turn may require a rethinking of well-established routines. We all know and understand that old routines are hard to part with.

So far so good, I would say. If the whole process is approached in a sensible vein—that is, if one is at least fully aware of the sensitivities and practicalities involved—the acceptance and introduction of policy changes should be practicable. However, there is a special danger that policymakers in our field should be acutely aware of, which is the fact that the resistance to change that I have just now depicted as being a more or less natural and very understandable phenomenon is passed off as the (very respectable) defense of the interests of the subject itself. The kind of defense I am thinking of is, for example, the resistance regularly shown by members of the teaching profession to setting the objectives for a language program at a level lower than native or near-native. Even if it can be demonstrated that that is the level the particular learner group requires, some teachers seem to find it difficult to accept that they should be instructing only part of the language, especially when the objective in question does not include all four skills of language competence. Anxiety concerning professional status may certainly be thought of as an explanation for such resistance.

1.4. Policy Implementation and Policy Results and Effects

A major point concerning implementation and effects and results is, of course, that they should specifically be taken into consideration when a new FLT policy is being planned. The point is self-evident, and I propose not to pay too much attention to it in this paper. There is only one particular issue I wish to mention, and that is that the FLT policy planner should satisfy himself that there is enough public support for the changes he is thinking of proposing, in order that their implementation should not be uncertain right from the start.

I could, of course, return again to the particular role teachers undoubtedly have in the whole process, and thus elaborate on some of the thoughts put forward in the previous section. But let me turn to the other actors in the learning/teaching process—the pupils—and see whether their support should also be won for proposed policy changes, or at least be taken into consideration. If their role is taken to be of great importance when the microcosm of classroom teaching is discussed—and it has been everybody's conviction for some time now that it is no use teaching a subject to unmotivated pupils—such is much less the case when policy changes are planned on a macro level. One example should suffice to substantiate the view that policy planning should heed not only pupils' expressed or well-established needs but also their feelings, attitudes, and motivation concerning proposed changes in education.

Traditionally, Dutch secondary education has been divided into two streams following primary education: general secondary education and (lower) vocational education. In the former stream pupils learn three obligatory foreign languages (English, French, and German), in the latter only one (usually English). In the attempts that have been made, for over twenty years, to integrate the two streams into one school type for all pupils aged twelve to fifteen, one of the persistent problems has been the position of foreign languages. Are all pupils of the future single secondary school type to be offered obligatory instruction in one, two, or three foreign languages?

I will not go into the various arguments people have given for their choices in this dilemma. The fact is that most people wind up opting for two foreign languages, a choice that in most cases is not just a compromise choice for the middle position, but is actually based on arguments that have to do, for example, with the needs picture, with the difficulty that is inherent in starting the learning of a certain number of foreign languages simultaneously, and so on. What may be of relevance for our discussion is a particular point that arises when the choice has to be made as to *which two* of the three traditionally taught languages (English, French, German) will be made obligatory in the future. That English should be (the first) one of the two is undisputed. The problem is whether French or German should be the other one, obligatory for everyone.

When, around 1985, Wout de Jong and I were asked to draw up a plan for FLT in the new situation, we opted for English and German (see Van Els and De Jong 1985). On the score of the needs pattern for the two languages—the central point in our argument—French and German had about equal claims. On other factors the languages were also more or less in balance. German is by far the easier language for Dutch beginners. On the other hand, French requires a longer learning route just because of that fact; and moreover, learning a Romance language beside Germanic English might be more productive in future FLT, when additional languages would have to be added. The main reason for us to opt for German—and this is the point I would like to make here—lay in our conviction that the introduction of obligatory French would just not be accepted by part of the student population, namely, the pupils traditionally entering the vocationally oriented stream following primary education, or (possibly) by their parents, for that matter. While everybody agrees that getting the second obligatory foreign language accepted in that sector of society will not be easy in the first place, the choice of the language in question is a very sensitive matter. Points that argue against French are, for instance, that it is looked upon as highbrow and as too difficult to learn for the lower segment of the pupil population. Arguments that had to do with pupils' attitudes and motivation, therefore, clinched the argument in favor of German.

2. CRITERIA FOR CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION

An important issue in policy planning, also for FLT, is that of (de)centralization. It is necessary to establish who is to take decisions as to what is to be taught—regarding which languages at what level to what pupils, for example, but also what aspects of those languages to what level—and how the teaching should be conducted. One may distinguish at least the following candidates for decision taking on the various aspects of FLT: the pupils and/or their parents, the teachers (either individually or as a group), the school authorities, the local and/or the regional authorities, the inspectorate, and the government.

The question at issue here is whether there are any criteria for establishing who is to take the many decisions involved in FLT planning. Let us first of all conclude that whoever is made responsible for deciding what is to be taught should not of necessity be also the one who is to decide on how the teaching should be conducted. In my country, for example, there is a tradition of leaving all matters of didactics strictly for the schools to decide on, whereas it is the government that lays down the rules as to which languages should be taught in schools and which not. This having been said, I propose to leave the question of who is to decide on "how?" for what it is—I will return to it in part in one of the following sections. Let me restrict the discussion to some points regarding criteria for establishing who should decide on "what?"

When just now I named a number of possible candidates for taking decisions, I was thinking only of FLT in the regular school system. The list would have been a bit shorter had I listed only candidates for FLT planning in private institutions. What is to be taught in the private sector is usually a matter of negotiation between the supplier and the buyer of the courses. Normally there is not much reason for public authorities to interfere in that process. Of course, in cases where an all-encompassing policy for FLT is formulated—a task the central authorities will usually take responsibility for in one way or another—an indication of what is to be taught in the private sector is normally implied in what such a policy states on this score for the public sector. Some languages may be expressly excluded from the school system, and thus be relegated to the private sector. In a truly all-encompassing policy the role to be played by the private sector is explicitly formulated in the sense that such a policy makes clear what tasks are left for the private sector to pick up.

The degree to which governments may play a role in FLT policy planning does not necessarily depend fully on arguments that have to do with intrinsic aspects of FLT. Countries may have traditions of their own regarding government interference in the field of education in general. In such cases traditions of that kind, of course, also have implications for planning for FLT. In the rest of this section a small number of criteria will be discussed that are intrinsic to FLT as such.

Above I have argued that needs are an important factor, if not *the* decisive one, in planning for FLT. The distinction I touched upon among (1) communicative needs, (2) needs directly related to communicative competence, and (3) needs only indirectly related to communicative competence is also of some relevance to the issue of (de)centralization. The greater the number of people with needs of the first kind for a particular language, the more likely the chance that that language should be selected for inclusion in the curriculum of public education. The greater the number of foreign languages for which there is that kind of demand, the more urgent the necessity will present itself for selecting (a) particular language(s) for inclusion in the curriculum. Under those circumstances centralization of the decision-taking process appears to be desirable. It is the kind of position we are in in the Netherlands. There is such an indisputably great demand for English, French, and German that only centralized decisions can make proper provision for the needs of the country.

I have also stressed that the needs factor is not the only one to take into consideration. There are other factors, and some of these may be such that they can be appreciated, and seen to, properly only by the central authorities. One such factor may be constituted by the implications the international context in which a country finds itself may have for its internal policies. Should, for example, the European Community one day decide to alter its multilingual policy for the community into a policy with preferential treatment of one particular language, say French, then the consequences of that decision would have to be drawn in each of the member states. In the Netherlands, French would no doubt have to replace German in the first phase of secondary education. Such a change would not come about by itself—the need for it would not be immediately felt by the population at large—and it would therefore have to be enforced by the central authorities. Let me stress, by the way, that I am neither expecting nor advocating this kind of change in the present European Community policy on languages.

There is another aspect of the international situation that central authorities are much better equipped than others to deal with. I am thinking of the pressure that countries may apply to promote the cause of their own national language in other countries, which sometimes may take the form of what Christ (1989, p. 101) calls "language imperialism" or "language colonialism." The importance a particular language has as a foreign language for a particular country should be assessed by the country in question itself, and not by the country whose national language it is. Pronouncements by the French president on the necessity of learning French as a foreign language should be seen in their true perspective. The level at which these statements can be dealt with best is that of the central authorities.

There are, finally, limits to the degree to which the contents of FLT programs can, but also should, be steered by higher-level authorities. Even when the objectives of the teaching program are defined centrally—that is, when a detailed and explicit definition is given of the language competence that is to be achieved—the actual content of the classroom teaching may still vary considerably. It should be left to the schools and/or the individual teachers—in constant consultation with their pupils?—to decide on the concrete day-to-day program.

3. THE IMPACT OF POLICIES ON CURRICULA

In preceding sections I have dealt with some points related to the impact that policies may or should have on FLT curricula. I will limit myself to two points here.

The first is that the implementation of policies is not an altogether automatic thing. Curricula can be changed only insofar as those involved in their implementation—teachers, in the first place—are willing to play their part in bringing about the necessary changes. The point is that one should not embark on planning a new policy without making sure beforehand that possible obstacles to bringing about the desired changes can be adequately dealt with.

The other point is the following. I have already indicated that in the Netherlands, government interference regarding FLT didactics—the "how?" aspect of curricula—is out of the question. That may be different in other countries. But whichever is the case, let us assume for the moment that one has a particular improvement of FLT in mind that would require a radical change of didactics, and one is looking for the best way to implement that improvement. I would contend that normally the best approach would be an indirect one, not only in a country like ours where the central government has no authority in such matters, but also in countries with different educational philosophies. New approaches to classroom teaching cannot be imposed directly. That much we know from innovation theory. It is the lesson also that many researchers have had to draw from the many failures to bring comparative studies of opposing didactic procedures to a good end.

The indirect way that I would advocate consists of two steps. The first and most essential step is the detailed and explicit definition of the objectives that are to be achieved. Even if one has a pretty good idea as to what particular new didactic approach should be adopted to effectuate the new objectives, one should refrain from imposing it. Let the teachers find out for themselves that a change of didactics may be called for in order to achieve the new objectives. The second step, then, is to offer effective help to teachers. The new didactic approach may be suggested to them in refresher courses and the like.

4. THE ECONOMICS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING POLICIES

Effectiveness of FLT provisions should be a prime consideration in planning policies for FLT, especially in countries where there is an extensive and varied pattern of needs for foreign languages. At this stage it is not feasible to point out particular solutions to concrete problems in concrete situations, pertaining to the "what?" and "how?" questions. I will not, therefore, embark on a comparative discussion of didactic procedures and approaches. I think, however, that a few remarks may be made regarding the economics of FLT policies on a higher level of abstraction than that of actual classroom teaching. The remarks I will make relate to (1) freedom of choice for the learners, (2) coherence in an all-encompassing FLT policy, and (3) the international aspect.

There is a great deal to be said for leaving decisions about which languages learners will receive instruction in to the learners themselves—with the assistance of parents and/or schools—or to the schools. In general, they may well be in the best position to judge where their interests lie, and there is of course the motivational aspect. My contention is, however, that there may be situations in which leaving such choices to learners may be very unproductive. I am thinking of the situation where there is ample evidence, from needs research and otherwise, that (nearly) everybody in the country needs to learn a particular language. A case in point is English in the Netherlands. In that situation it is a waste of time and energy to make all learners find out for themselves where their best interests lie. Moreover, if the choice is left to the pupils, the system will have to provide for those cases where learners decide not to do the obvious thing and may thus handicap themselves. Another situation in which limitation of freedom of choice may be called for is when there is a need for a number of foreign languages, all of which should be allotted a place in the system of provisions somewhere, sometime. Even if the decision as to when exactly each of these languages is to be offered should be indifferent as such, and might thus be left to the individual pupils themselves, it may turn out to be very uneconomical to have to arrange the provisions in such a way that all individual wishes of pupils may be met.

Under all circumstances, in planning FLT policy it pays to optimize the coherence of the system of provisions. The last remark in the preceding paragraph already points in that direction. In particular, the connections between the various sectors should be carefully attended to in situations where a great deal of FLT is taking place. Otherwise valuable time and energy may be spent redoing what has been done before. Moreover, progress may be hampered by deficient or ill-defined connections between adjoining sectors. Two points deserve special mention in this context.

Recently there has arisen internationally an interest in the creation of a "general framework of objectives" for FLT. Such a framework was discussed at a recent conference of the Council of Europe at Rüschlikon, Switzerland, and the idea has also attracted attention within the LINGUA Program of the European Community. There is no need to expand on the idea itself now. It is my conviction that such a general framework—also referred to as an "autonomous structure"—will contribute considerably to optimizing the coherence of FLT planning.

The combinations in which foreign languages are offered to learners—to be learned one after the other or, for that matter, simultaneously—also deserve to be given some thought in planning FLT. It is a well-known fact that learning a second foreign language may be facilitated depending on which language was learned first. The same applies, *mutatis mutandis,* to the third language learned, and so on. To make the coherence of the provisions as optimal as possible, a first consideration therefore should be which language to choose as the "*langue d'introduction*" (see Christ and Bertrand 1990, p. 47). The learning of the first language may prepare pupils, in a particular way, for the learning of other languages. It represents for most pupils the first actual contact with a language that differs from their mother tongue, which is bound to give them an acute awareness of how differently sounds and morphological features may be arranged and still constitute a well-organized whole.

Why, by the way, Christ and Bertrand (1990) recommend that all languages of the European Community should be considered for the role of *langue d'introduction,* I do not understand. Of course, in an abstract sense all languages are equally qualified to serve as *langues d'introduction,* and if that is what Christ and Bertrand mean to say, there is every reason to agree with them. But that is not the point at issue, it seems.

My final remarks relate to the international context within which each national FLT policy has to be conceived. The question here is how far aspects of that context have to be taken into account in the planning process. Nobody will dispute that in each national FLT policy, maximal use should be made of the facilities provided by such international programs as LINGUA and ERASMUS in the European context. Another development that I mentioned before is the proposal to establish a general European framework of objectives. The express aim of the proposal is, as I have indicated, to optimize the formulation of well-balanced systems of FLT objectives in all the European countries.

A warning may be called for with regard to what I said in connection with the European programs. All around, one can notice a tendency to accept what these programs have to offer as the ultimate goal in the field of internationalization. What these programs offer by way of grants and subsidies seems to constitute for many the maximum investment in international activities imaginable. In my view, one should first make an independent assessment of one's own regarding the goals for internationalization and only then look to the European programs to see what assistance may be found in them to carry out the objectives. Supplementary action and/or funding on top of the European financial support should not be ruled out in advance.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE PLANNING IN THE UNITED STATES

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The unpreparedness of American society to deal with other countries in their own languages will be an increasing handicap as we move into the next century. Even allowing for the patina of English currently used among elites in many parts of the world, our strong trend toward monolingualism will surely continue to hobble us as we expand our relationships in a world that not only has ceased to be bipolar but is becoming nonpolar. Our vital political and economic interests are drawing us to countries whose capacity to deal solely in English is very limited, and as we deepen our relationships with even old partners like Europe and Latin America and become internally more multilingual, the need for more and more Americans to deal firsthand in a variety of languages other than English can only increase.

Thus, our stake in expanding American competence in other languages is high. However, little concentrated attention is being paid to this issue. While other countries of the world, particularly those in Europe, are drawing up national plans to raise the foreign language competency of their citizens, language planning in the United States is very limited. Where it occurs at all, it tends to be dispersed through various levels of the educational system and to address one issue at a time.[1] The European countries—both individually, and collectively through such organizations as the Council of Europe and the European Community—are fully engaged in planning for the future in language education. We are not. Indeed, a substantial portion of the American foreign language community believes that foreign language planning is either an oxymoron or an odious heresy.

It is easy to understand the urgency of such foreign language planning in the context of the development of a transnational Europe. But even without an immediate stimulus like that facing the Europeans, our own foreign language system is in desperate need of just such attention. As will be noted, many aspects of that system are dysfunctional, defeating the efforts of even the most gifted language teacher or student to produce high levels of language competency. The culprit is not pedagogical shortcomings, but rather structural flaws—architectural disabilities of the system that result in too few Americans even approaching, let alone retaining, a level of language competency that will enable them to use a foreign language. Yet the diffuse goals and totally disaggregated decision making in our foreign language educational system make it difficult to develop collective policies that might better serve our national priorities. It is the absence of such a national policy discussion in the United States that is most striking.

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[1] This contrast between European and American language planning is dramatized in Richard D. Lambert, *Implications of the New Dutch National Action Plan for American Foreign Language Policy*, National Foreign Language Center Position Paper (Washington, D.C.: NFLC, June 1991).

1. DE FACTO PUBLIC POLICY

The lack of national planning with respect to foreign languages in the United States is particularly striking in that planning for general educational change is currently at the forefront of public attention. It is curious that foreign language education has not been included in the educational reform movement currently under way in many other curricular areas. It played only a minor role in the deliberations and recommendations for educational reform issued by the National Governors' Association; it was not discussed at the Education Summit; it is not part of the agenda for America 2000; it is not central to the effort to develop national assessment standards or to create a system for certifying master teachers, or any of the other current national efforts to change the design and functioning of our educational system.

In view of the national attention now being given to educational reform, one would expect to find a rich discussion taking place with respect to foreign language policy, one paralleling and interrelated with those taking place concerning mathematics, science, geography, history, and even the arts. However, the discussions taking place with respect to other areas of the curriculum have not yet touched foreign language instruction. To use an expression of Ernest Boyer's, "Foreign language is not even on the national screen." And yet our foreign language system is in desperate need of just such attention. The number of Americans with enough foreign language competence actually to utilize the language as adults is disappointingly small. The overall organization of the language instructional system defeats the classroom efforts of even the most gifted teacher or student. And the lack of consensus on goals for foreign language teaching makes any reform difficult to achieve. If there ever were an area calling for fresh educational policy, foreign language is it.

This is not to suggest that there are no governmental efforts under way in the United States to change and improve the current foreign language system. At the federal level there are a number of funding programs dedicated either to supporting catalytic changes or to the long-term maintenance of aspects of the system—for instance, instruction in the non–Western European languages—that might otherwise not be adequately sustained. Moreover, several states, such as New York, California, Arizona, and South Carolina, have engaged in a major reexamination of their overall foreign language system policies. However, federal funding programs and state-level language policy initiatives are rarely based on a comprehensive plan, and they tend to concentrate on only a few aspects of the foreign language system: for instance, introducing non-Western language teaching into more schools, or raising requirements for the amount of foreign language study all high school students must undertake.

As a result of these piecemeal initiatives, the United States can be said to have a de facto public policy on foreign languages comprising the sum of the various individual governmental initiatives for change in the current system. In the case of the federal government, such initiatives are embodied in funding programs that underwrite catalytic projects. In contrast, state policy is not the sum of funding programs, but the sum of legislative and administrative fiats mandating structural changes in the school system. Indeed, one of the complaints about the introduction of new state foreign language policies is that they often require major changes in the current system without providing the increased funding necessary to carry those changes out.

Since education, including foreign language instruction, is one of the subjects reserved for state and local administration, the federal government's role in this domain is sharply circumscribed. It can play a largely exhortative role, calling for major structural changes, as it does now in its press for national assessment standards or for allowing parents to choose which school their children will attend. However, as noted above, foreign language education is not part of the discourse on such major structural changes. In the main, the federal government affects educational practice, including foreign language education, through the appropriation of targeted supplemental funding. Sometimes the provision of federal moneys can play a major role in the organization of education. For instance, the federal programs providing need-based fellowships and guaranteed loans for college students cover a major portion of the tuition costs for students at both public and private colleges and universities. In the case of foreign language education, however, federal support programs have operated at the margin, providing funds for a very limited segment of the enterprise and for limited purposes.

Since the overall operation of the language education system is not a responsibility of the federal government, such funding programs must be piecemeal and targeted at particular domains or changes that Congress wishes to address. Each of these funding programs is embodied in its own legislation and administering agency. The federal agencies that deal with education tend to be divided by educational level; that is, elementary and secondary education are the responsibility of one set of agencies, higher education another. There is no established mechanism—and few occasions—for considering what these segmental initiatives are intended to add up to in addressing the overall needs of foreign language education. Nor is there any mechanism for assessing retrospectively either what the actual operation of the individual grant programs turned out to be, or what collective effect they had in introducing change. Hence, each program stands on its own and has its own special trajectory.

State- and local-level governments, on the other hand, set policy for and support the main corpus of the language education system. There is, of course, a large segment of the enterprise located in private colleges and universities, and they generally set their own policies. However, to the extent that there is public policy, most of it takes place at the state and local level. Hence, it is at this level that major shifts in policy must be effected if the foreign language system as a whole is to change.

In this short paper I can deal in an illustrative fashion with only three of the major policy issues currently facing the American foreign language system: (1) the broadening of language choice; (2) system coverage and architecture; and (3) the assessment of results.[2] I will try to indicate the interplay between an issue, the political level at which the planning takes place, some general processes that seem evident as planning evolves, and the varying catalytic strategies exemplified by the different policy initiatives.

2. BROADENING THE CHOICE OF LANGUAGES

One of the major issues facing language policymakers in the United States, as elsewhere, is which languages should be offered and taken. This seemingly central policy issue is one that has received almost no direct attention. For one thing, in no part of the American foreign language system is decision making less deliberate and more dispersed than in the complement of languages offered and taken. In language choice, ours is a constrained free-market system. In theory, schools and teachers offer whatever languages they choose, and students opt to enroll or not to enroll in a particular language. The complement of school-learned language competencies is a product of that free-choice market. In fact, however, such choices are constrained by the dead hand of past decisions and by the nonfungibility of teacher competencies. Hence, student choices are in effect limited to Spanish, French, and German, which capture more than 95 percent of all enrollments at all levels.

It is not that there have been no swings over time in the relative importance of one or another language. Around the turn of the century Latin was the language with the highest enrollments. In subsequent decades there was a shift to German, then to French, and now to Spanish as the language with the highest number of students enrolled. Today German ranks third. The current ranking of languages is not entirely stable. While Spanish enrollments are increasing dramatically, German, French, and Italian remain stagnant. Japanese is rapidly gaining ground and has already overtaken Russian.

Language choice should be a policy issue, but it is not. To our knowledge no one has asked whether the current complement of languages offered and taken and the pool of adult skills that results are optimal for the United States. Nor is there even any systematic knowledge about why students take one or another language and what it would take to change the order of language enrollments.

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[2] For a general outline of the American system, see Richard D. Lambert, *The National Foreign Language System*, National Foreign Language Center Occasional Paper (Washington, D.C.: NFLC, June 1989).

A number of the European countries are facing the issue of language choice more directly. The Dutch, for instance, are choosing to concentrate almost all secondary school instruction on three languages: English, French, and German. All other languages are relegated to higher education or to specialized schools. Other countries are making similar decisions and have developed specific rationales for their choices. Choices in Europe are easier to make. There the most important criterion is the likelihood of actual use in communication within the European context. English is always chosen as a world language, followed by one or more of the European languages. The basis of our choices may well be different from that in Europe, but at least there should be a rational argument about what an American complement of languages offered should look like and what the relative scale of enrollments should be—or for that matter what the criteria used in making those decisions should be.

3. INTRODUCING THE LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGES

While we have not developed an overall rationale for the appropriate mix of languages that should be offered and taken, in recent years a number of governmental initiatives and funding programs have concentrated on one aspect of language choice: the extension of our capacity to teach one or more of the non–Western European languages. What follows is a short examination of this issue and the federal- and state-level programs that have been introduced to address it.[3]

3.1. NDEA / HEA Title VI

One of the most durable goals of the federal government over the past forty years has been to shift the complement of languages offered in our formal education system. The oldest federal funding program dealing specifically with foreign language instruction is the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), later the Higher Education Act (HEA), Title VI.[4] The stimulus for the passage of that act was what was perceived as a foreign language crisis. A major and seemingly threatening event had occurred abroad, one that we would at least have known about ahead of time if we had had a greater capacity to understand foreign languages. Stung by the surprise of the Russians' launching of Sputnik, Congress was convinced that if more Americans knew the Russian language—and, by extension, languages of other countries outside Western Europe—we might be spared such intelligence shocks in the future.

The initial goal of NDEA Title VI was quite narrow: to produce a small cadre of advanced-level specialists who would serve as a national reservoir of expertise and teach other Americans about non–Western European countries. Following this narrow goal, the initial federal investment was channeled into graduate-level education, distributing money to campuses, to encourage them to establish teaching centers focusing on one or another non-Western world area, and through those centers to graduate students, to encourage them to invest time in becoming specialists on those countries. Federal investment was at the margin, both in the fact that it concentrated on the graduate level while the bulk of the resources and personnel in the foreign language educational system is concentrated at the undergraduate and secondary school levels, and in the fact that the amount of money spent represented only a small fraction—over the years it has averaged about 10 percent—of the total costs of the programs being funded.

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[3] For the detailed analysis of federal funding programs and state initiatives with respect to foreign language education, I am indebted to Jamie Draper.

[4] For a history of this legislation, see Richard D. Lambert, *History and Future of HEA Title VI*, National Foreign Language Center Position Paper (Washington, D.C.: NFLC, October 1991).

Over the years this relatively simple initial investment strategy followed one of the cardinal rules of federal funding programs: expand or die. In the first place, as is typical of many programs whose primary goal is linguistic, support of language development was combined with other international studies goals. From the outset, the development of linguistic competencies was tied to and later submerged by training in area studies—that is, the study of the social science and humanistic aspects of the countries where the language is spoken. Today, in those graduate-level language and area studies programs, only about 15 percent of the federal funds are spent on language instruction.

A wide variety of intervention styles was also added. In addition to funding for university-based centers and fellowships, NDEA Title VI adopted other investment strategies. Funds were provided for research and development—primarily the production of new teaching materials; overseas research by both faculty and students; summer school programs both here and abroad for students and teachers; overseas advanced language training centers; and national service centers to help in the development of language training more generally.

In addition to expanded investment strategies, more and more clienteles were added to the list of grantees. Over the years it became clear that the primary enrollees in foreign language instruction were students in the humanities and social sciences. Students concentrating in the natural sciences and in the applied and professional schools remained as monolingual as ever. Hence, receipt of federal funding in Title VI began to depend on the inclusion of one of these underrepresented groups. In particular, because of national concern about our future international competitiveness, there arose specific funding programs fostering language instruction for business majors. First, existing Title VI centers were required to establish links with their business schools; second, business students were to be given priority in awarding fellowships; third, a whole new set of awards was established to foster new business-oriented initiatives; and finally, a set of Centers for International Business Education were funded on nineteen university campuses, all of which were required to include language instruction in their curricula. It should be added that the representation of foreign language instruction in programs serving these new clienteles was extremely light. And even within the foreign language section of the program, a mix of client pressure and changed congressional intent broadened the coverage of Title VI beyond the non-Western European languages to include Spanish, French, and German, further diluting the initial intent of the legislation.

Title VI also illustrates another major dilemma in public policy formulation. To accomplish the catalytic goals of federal funding programs, a proactive rather than reactive investment is required—that is, directing funds to new areas and new clienteles to accomplish new purposes, rather than selecting the best from an applicant pool that basically represents the old constituency whose tendency is to do things the old way. The primary means of distributing funds under Title VI has been an annual or three-year open competition for grants. To the extent that there is a proactive role for the federal government, it is contained in the guidelines set for grant competitions and the ranking of proposals. The process of peer group review and the internal operating preferences of the administrative agencies can make the outcome somewhat different from the catalytic intent embodied in the original legislation.

3.2. The Secretary's Discretionary Fund

The expansionary imperative of Title VI was limited when it came to reside in a larger funding bill restricted to higher education. There were some attempts to extend the coverage to secondary schools by requiring the graduate-level centers to spend some of their funds on "outreach" to assist in the extension of language and area studies to that level. This was not enough. Believing that the secondary education system, like the university system, would broaden its language offerings only in response to a targeted federal investment, Congress attempted to broaden the language offerings at the high school and elementary school levels to include what were called "critical languages."

When repeated efforts to pass freestanding legislation failed, Congress included foreign languages as an allowable activity in a bill designed to improve the teaching of math and science at the elementary and secondary school levels. While a percentage of all Title II funds from the Education for Economic Security Act could be used for foreign language teacher training activities, it was the Secretary's Discretionary Fund for Critical Foreign Languages that provided money for model foreign language programs at the elementary and secondary levels. This short-lived program was discontinued when Congress determined that Title II should be devoted exclusively to math and science education.

Five things are especially notable in this experiment. First, the mode of investment was again the open competition—sending out a notice that funds were available and selecting from among the best resulting applications. Second, the amount of money was marginal to the cost of the change, so that only small incremental changes were likely. Third, the proposed changes were aimed not at the margin, as in Title VI's original concern with graduate education, but at the mainstream—the secondary school level, where most of the existing language education takes place. Fourth, the government funded short-term innovations only, almost guaranteeing that changes would be written in sand, their effect disappearing as the small investment of external funds was withdrawn. And fifth, as Congress has moved to broaden the spectrum of foreign languages at the secondary and primary levels, it has also tried to reduce the number of languages covered. It may make sense to support less commonly taught languages like Twi, Oriya, or Quechua at the advanced graduate level. It makes less sense to do so at the high school level. Hence, the notion of "critical languages" was invented.

While the original intent of the bill was to focus on the languages most crucial to the nation's economic competitiveness, there was no consensus on what those languages were. During floor debate in the House of Representatives, one member of Congress noted that while Spanish might not need additional support, Arabic, Japanese, Russian, and Italian did, and those languages were critical to the nation's future. A second member noted, however, that Arabic and Russian were really not that important to the nation's economy, although Japanese and Chinese were. The legislation instructed the secretary of education to consult with the secretaries of defense, health and human services, and state and the director of the National Science Foundation to come up with a list of critical foreign languages. The result was a list of 156 different languages.

3.3. The Foreign Language Assistance Act

When foreign languages were removed from Title II of the Education for Economic Security Act, they were given their own program: the Foreign Language Assistance Act. Its mandate was to promote "improvement in the quantity and quality of foreign language education offered in the Nation's elementary and secondary schools." The issue of "critical languages" was revived, not in authorizing legislation but in legislation appropriating funds for the program. Priority for funding was to be given to programs in the less commonly taught languages, with Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian being cited as examples. When preliminary program regulations were issued, only these languages, plus Korean, were eligible for funding. Following protests from state education officials and representatives of multilanguage organizations, funding priority was given to the five languages, with an additional five—French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish—allowed if resources were unavailable in the first five.

What is most interesting about this legislation is the nature of the investment strategy. It follows the federal government's preference for recruiting other funds to its causes. It requires that grantees provide an even match of other moneys to whatever the federal government provides. However, except for the special linguistic focus and the concentration on secondary and primary education, the act is as nonproactive as it could be. Moreover, the decision making is essentially moved from the federal to the state and local levels. State agencies must apply for the money, and it is distributed as a block grant to a state on the basis of a population formula, although the federal government retains the right to reject a state application. The act continues the federal government's preference for open competitions and for model innovative programs, but it is the state that will make the choice. This is an interesting natural experiment in de facto policymaking in that it represents an extreme example of reactive investment strategies with funding dispersed to the state and local levels. It makes an interesting contrast to the initial intent of Title VI, which was supposed to be proactive and to retain decision making at the federal level.

3.4. Star Schools

In the next extension of congressional intent to broaden language choice, the legislation was aimed to extend instruction in foreign languages to clienteles who could not receive such instruction in the schools in which they were registered. Prominent in their minds were minority children enrolled in inner-city schools and students more generally in smaller rural schools that were unlikely to be able to afford programs to teach any foreign language, let alone non–Western European ones. To serve these clienteles, Congress provided funds to disperse such instruction through the use of distance learning technology. Under a program called the Star School system, very substantial federal funds were provided to a set of state consortia to give instruction primarily in Russian, Japanese, and Chinese—although Spanish, French, German, and Latin are also offered—by means of televised distance learning networks. Foreign language education was only one of the subjects taught in the Star School system. Indeed, its primary focus was math and science. But it is worth noting that as an investment strategy it again operated at the margin of the foreign language instructional system, teaching only one or two years of very few languages to a few thousand students scattered throughout the country. Moreover, the decision-making process was located in consortia somewhere in between the federal and the state level.

It is remarkable that so much federal funding and attention has been given to the broadening of foreign language choice. In addition to the legislation described above, there are other funding programs, both governmental and private, dedicated to the same purpose. For instance, the National Endowment for the Humanities has a new funding initiative with a primary objective of broadening language choice by sponsoring the study of non-Western languages via curricula with a specifically humanistic approach. The proposed National Education Security Act promises to fund instruction in even the least commonly taught languages. Even foreign governments and American philanthropic foundations have joined in this effort to broaden language choice. The Japanese government is about to establish a heavily funded center to further the teaching of Japanese in American high schools, and to bring to the United States a large number of Japanese "youths" to help provide such instruction. At the state level in recent years there have been a number of new legislative initiatives encouraging the expansion of instruction in less commonly taught languages, particularly Japanese. Foundation grants such as those of the Carnegie Corporation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and the Ford Foundation have supported the extension of instruction in the less commonly taught languages into high schools. A recent Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant provided approximately $350,000 to each of twenty-five colleges, primarily to improve their offerings in the less commonly taught languages.

Viewed as a whole, the concentration of so much of our de facto national planning on broadening language choice and on expanding instruction in the less commonly taught languages is surprising, since such instruction comprises so small a proportion of all foreign language enrollments. Moreover, almost no attention is paid directly to the broader question of how to arrive at a rational policy for language choice more generally. Nor do we seem to have a coherent policy even on broadening choice in the non-Western languages, nor has there been any systematic study of the cumulative effect of the various individual initiatives. Each effort seems to swim off on its own without any reference to what is being done elsewhere. Almost no attention has been paid to what has produced permanent change in language choice and what successful programs of instruction in the less commonly taught languages look like.

4. SYSTEM COVERAGE AND ARTICULATION

Some of the major policy issues in any foreign language system are how many and what kinds of people should spend how much time studying foreign languages, and how to put the various parts of the system together to integrate them into a cumulative whole. In the American system, priority has been given to these issues in descending order. Trying to expand the number of people who receive some foreign language training has been given the highest priority. Somewhat less attention has been paid to how much training they should receive, and even less to how to integrate language education into the various levels of the system.

4.1. Participation Rates

Although it is not usually described in this fashion, in recent years most of the attention and most of the foreign language advocacy rhetoric have been devoted to increasing the number of students who are enrolled in language classes. Currently, 38 percent of students take some foreign language courses while they are in high school. About two-thirds of those entering higher education have taken at least two years of language courses in high school, and about half of all students receive some foreign language training in college.

Attempts to raise that participation rate are generally tied to college or university admission or graduation standards for higher education. A national survey of higher education institutions in the United States found that in 1987, 22 percent of research universities, 13 percent of comprehensive universities, 11 percent of baccalaureate colleges, and only 1 percent of two-year colleges required prior study of a foreign language for admission.[5] As part of their requirements for graduation, 69 percent of four-year colleges and universities required some language training for some of their students. Requirements at the college level, however, are usually not binding on all students. Only 9 percent of research universities require all students to take a foreign language course before they graduate, and only 22 percent of four-year colleges. Requirements tend to be specific to the major subject in which the students' concentrations lie. For instance, 90 percent of humanities majors and 73 percent of social science majors will be required to take foreign language courses by the time they graduate, but only 50 percent of natural science majors, 22 percent of business majors, and 8 percent of engineering majors.

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[5] See Richard D. Lambert, *International Studies and the Undergraduate* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1989), pp. 62–63.

Exposure to foreign language study at the college or university level is therefore spotty. Even allowing for some students enrolling in foreign language courses independent of requirements—and many of them do—only 48 percent of all students enrolled in four-year institutions take any foreign language courses before they graduate.

4.2. Length of Training

In addition to the low proportion of students studying foreign language, the total amount of language study is typically low. Even where there are formal language requirements, the amount of study required can be quite small. One-third of the institutions with any language requirements at all insist on only one or two semesters of courses for the humanists, who tend to study languages more than students with other disciplinary foci. For the engineers, 60 percent of the requirements are for one year or less. I am aware of several institutions in which a one-year foreign language requirement can be met by taking one semester of one language and one semester of another.

The consequence of such minimal requirements is what can almost be called a natural law: in both high school and college, 50 percent of the students at each level drop out at the next level. The overall number of language courses college students actually take on the average is quite modest: 1.5 for all students, 2.0 for humanists, 0.8 for business students, and 0.3 for engineering students. It is difficult to imagine that such modest amounts of foreign language training can do more than introduce a student to a language.

4.3. Articulation of Levels

One hallmark of American education is that the various levels of the system march to their own drummers. In most disciplines there is an inherent sequencing of topics and subfields that makes students' accumulation of subject matter and their transition across levels relatively easy. However, the dispersed and highly idiosyncratic decision-making process in foreign language instruction and the relatively low degree of consensus on curricula and teaching styles make it inevitable that there will be problems of articulation. The most difficult transition point is between high school and college, where major intellectual and pedagogical differences divide the two levels of language instruction. In fact, it is a common experience for students having taken one or two years of language instruction in high school to be placed back in beginning classes in college. At the low end of the system, the goals and teaching styles of elementary school language instruction are currently the subject of very intense debate. Middle school language instruction floats unanchored somewhere in between. And the progress of the increasing number of students who work their way through these various levels is as yet uncharted. To the extent that there is any tradition stitching together the various levels of the language educational system, it is the textbooks, but they are numerous, subject to rapid obsolescence, and primarily aimed at specific educational levels.

In such a system of carefully partitioned layers, it is easy to lose sight of students' needs for consistent, cumulative skill acquisition. What is clearly needed is an individual-student-based system of tracking, setting sequenced goals and providing telescoped teaching materials that can overcome the discontinuities inherent in the current system.

4.4. Policy Initiatives

Attempts to require the exposure of more and more students to foreign language study has been one of the principal goals of the foreign language teaching community. In higher education it takes the form of continuing hand-to-hand combat in one department, school, or institution at a time. Increasing student exposure to foreign language instruction has only occasionally been the subject of planning by the federal government. For instance, Senator Paul Simon has in the past proposed financial inducements for both higher education institutions and secondary schools to increase foreign language enrollments.

The major governmental initiatives on this issue have been taken at the state level, in the form of either high school graduation requirements, particularly for college-bound students, as in the case of Georgia, or requirements for admission to state-supported institutions of higher education, as in California. Currently only New York and the District of Columbia require language study of all high school students, while eighteen other states have a foreign language requirement that applies to some students. Indeed, four states now have language requirements for elementary school. Almost all of these state-level requirements have been introduced within the last decade.

The results of these efforts have been positive, but marginal, in increasing the number and proportion of students who take foreign language courses. The proportion of all high school students enrolled in language classes went from 32 percent in 1985 to 38 percent in 1990. College-level enrollments increased by 18 percent between 1986 and 1990, but a substantial portion of that increase took place at the two-year-college level, where language instruction was being introduced for the first time.

To my knowledge, no one is addressing the issue of raising the amount of foreign language training that students who enroll in foreign language courses actually receive. The purpose of almost all of the policy initiatives is the single-minded goal of expanding the number who receive any exposure at all. One would think that at least as much policy attention would be given to the question of how much foreign language education is enough for particular kinds of learners. Indeed, at some point a choice will have to be made between putting more national resources into providing a little bit of language instruction to as many students as possible, and directing some of those resources to lengthening the period of study for some students so that they can acquire a meaningful level of competency. Such a policy discussion has not even begun.

Problems of articulation are now catching the attention of federal policymakers. Since federal education agencies tend to be stratified by level of education themselves—in particular, they tend to specialize in higher versus secondary and primary education—it is difficult for individual agencies to span the different educational levels in addressing the issues of articulation. Similarly, state governments tend to regulate primary and secondary education closely and to step very lightly in dictating change in higher education. However, in the past few years several of the federal funding agencies—the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching (FIRST), and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)—have formed a loose coalition to address problems of articulation. Their intervention strategy is reactive—that is, as in most federal programs, calling for grant applications for pilot demonstration projects. As in many such interventions, pilot projects make only limited contributions to changing the system as a whole. Only determined and long-term policy intervention by state governments and consortia of higher education institutions is likely to make any substantial impact on problems of articulation.

5. THE ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

One of the most pressing needs of foreign language instruction in the United States is the development of consistent measures to assess student progress, to provide information that will facilitate the learning process, and to certify achievements and levels of competency at the end of each training level.

5.1. Foreign Language Testing

In Europe, foreign language testing is often the responsibility of a freestanding organization of the central government that sets and administers examinations and establishes standards for successful completion. In addition, there is usually an equivalent organization that develops curricula. One of the hallmarks of language instruction in many European countries is the overt link between uniform curricula and tests of student performance, both centrally administered. While there has been some concern about the backlash effect of uniform testing—that is, that classroom teaching may be bent toward achieving high ranking on the test—language tests themselves are not subject to major legitimacy battles as they are in the United States. Indeed, foreign language reform movements in Europe are largely about curriculum and pedagogical style, while in the United States the dominant reform movement has been centered on testing strategy. Moreover, the American testing movement is moving in a direction opposite to the situation found in the Netherlands and in much of Europe. We have been seeking to establish criteria for tests of language proficiency that are independent of curricular content and teaching style, although in recent years there has been some backing away from this ideology of isolation. One of the paradoxes of the American situation is that the movement to induce universal adoption of uniform proficiency standards is severely handicapped by the disaggregated nature of decision making in foreign language education. It is also curious that in other parts of American education, particularly in mathematics and the natural sciences, there are strong forces moving toward the kind of national testing procedures and standards found in Europe. In the United States, however, the foreign language profession is almost totally unconnected to such developments.

This is a propitious time to develop national assessment tools for foreign language learning. There is currently widespread acceptance of the importance of standardized student outcome measures as a tool for monitoring and improving foreign language instruction. The past decade has seen the dissemination of a particular rating scheme and testing style, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages/Interagency Language Roundtable (ACTFL/ILR) scale and the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). The battle to achieve legitimacy for these techniques has been largely won. However, there is a growing debate about the appropriateness of this scale and associated testing style for school classrooms, drawn as the scale and tests are from governmental language schools that train adults in an intensive format for occupational use of the language. Moreover, the expansion in the number of learners to be tested has put considerable strain on a system developed to test a few learners at a time in an interactive format in a carefully controlled learning environment. Experience in the widespread use of those tests has raised questions about their suitability for mass administration, the standardization of raters' judgment, and the proper use of test results. As a result, the field of language studies, including the sponsors of the ACTFL/ILR standards, is ready for a reconsideration of what the nature of a national assessment strategy for foreign languages should be.

There is a growing interest in increasing the variety of tests available for the very different purposes for which the tests are given. In addition to providing an overall assessment of the level of proficiency at the end of training, tests should provide feedback to improve both the student's learning and the quality of instruction. In addition, some tests should measure the learner's capacity to perform specific tasks or should provide a diagnosis of achievements and errors to help both students and teachers improve the learning process.

5.2. Policy Initiatives

The history of public policy with respect to language testing is a curious one. On the one hand, few of the federal funding programs have provided funds for the development of language tests. Yet the particular style of language testing that has gained widespread adoption in many parts of the educational system was originally developed for use in the federal government's foreign language schools—originally the Foreign Service Institute and later the Defense Department and other agencies, all gathered into an organization called the Federal Interagency Language Roundtable. On the academic side, one of the major teachers' associations, the ACTFL, collaborated with the federal agencies in adapting the government's scale for academic use. Out of this collaboration came a testing method, the OPI, and a set of rating criteria called the ACTFL/ILR standards. Subsequently, various parts of the federal government have urged that the academic community adopt this testing style and rating format. There was even a suggestion that the various governmental agencies formally notify universities that only students certified in terms of that test would be employed. Title VI itself never required the use of the OPI or the proficiency guidelines. What it called for was the use of "proficiency-based" assessments, intended by the authors of the legislation to mean "performance-based" or "competency-based" assessments, although legislators could hardly be expected to be privy to the rancorous debates within the field as to what these various terms mean. A number of the administrators of Title VI, however, did and still do consider the OPI procedures and the proficiency guidelines, drawn as they are from the experience of the governmental language schools, as the prototypes toward which academic language instruction should be moving. Nonetheless, the use of the term *proficiency* led to some misinterpretation of the legislation, and the wording of the act was later changed to reflect this fact.

Over the past decade the use of the OPI and the ACTFL/ILR standards has spread to a surprising extent among language programs throughout the country. Moreover, these tests and standards have begun to show up in state-level language policy. For instance, the state of Texas uses them to certify its language teachers, and the state of New York has used them to revamp the goals of its foreign language system. More recently, there has been a bit of a backlash as the suitability of this single testing strategy for meeting the varied needs of assessment is being questioned.

However, the case of the ACTFL/ILR guidelines represents an unusual form of governmental intervention in the American foreign language educational system. It is based neither on the project-funding model of most federal programs nor on the official-mandate model of most state interventions. Perhaps one reason for its success is that the use of the OPI test coincided with a movement among language teachers to shift to a more "communicative" approach with an emphasis on oral interaction, which the ACTFL/ILR standards purported to measure. As a natural case study in policy intervention strategies in the American foreign language educational settings, it is of great interest.

I have chosen to address here only a few major issues to illustrate the nature of American public policy formulation with respect to foreign languages. Many more topics could be discussed: teacher recruitment and training; occupationally oriented language teaching; distance learning; the role of high technology; adult language upgrading and reinforcement; foreign study; increasing the quality of instruction; maintaining a planning and implementation superstructure; and encouraging innovation and making it cumulative. These topics and others will be dealt with at length in the National Foreign Language Center's policy seminars. In all these areas, rationalized, central decision making is unusual. Ad hoc policymaking at the local or state level is much more common. It is time we decided how best to address foreign language educational issues in a more orderly fashion, keeping in mind the peculiarities and strengths of the American educational system.

COMMUNICATION, FOREIGN LANGUAGES, AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE POLICY

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Tradition and cultural values, political argumentation, representation of various personal or group interests, and consideration of assumed or real demands coming from outside the language teaching profession are often more decisive for the structuring of foreign language policies than are criteria that arise from insights into true learner needs, conceptualization of language learning, and views about the nature of communicative competence.

In this paper aspects of foreign language planning will be discussed from the Finnish viewpoint, and an attempt will be made to consider the constitution of national foreign language policies in the light of what is known of communication and the national communicator image. This will be done on the basis of the hypothesis that the ability to evaluate communicative success is an integral part of a person's communicative competence (Parks 1985, p. 171; Sajavaara 1987, p. 254). In addition to the way in which the communicative situation itself is managed, the impression of success or failure also depends on the goals of the interacting parties and on each communicator's views of himself or herself as a psychosociological creature.

A consistent foreign language plan cannot be drawn up without consideration of how the persons who will be affected by the plan see themselves as participants in communicative interaction. The learning and use of foreign languages is largely dependent on subjective theories about communication, language, language learning and proficiency, and culture (Kohonen 1988, p. 199; see also Grotjahn 1991). Subjective theories of learning also develop during the learning career, and their impact on the learning outcome can be more substantial than that of decisions made by educational authorities.

1. NATIONAL COMMUNICATOR IMAGE

Conceptions and stereotypes relating to nationality and national character are persistent. The deeply ingrained ideas that people have about themselves as members of their nationalities[1] or other similar reference groups, and about the characteristics typical of them, resist change and interference. In Finland it is usual to hear people talk about themselves as a nationality whose members like isolation and are practically incapable of communicating with other people. The view that this national communication handicap relates to aspects of foreign language use in particular is widespread; many Finns believe that their foreign language aptitude is lower than that of other people. This characteristic of the Finns has even been recorded in drama: in one of his plays Bertolt Brecht refers to the Finns as a nation of people who are silent in two languages (Finnish and Swedish, which are both national languages in Finland). It is rather easy to see that people in Finland generally like this characterization of themselves.

Stereotypes based on myth and misconception also find their way into the writings of established scholars. In his history of the Finnish language Lauri Hakulinen (1979 [1941], pp. 33–34), a well-known Finnish-language scholar, described the general features of the language by adopting certain characterizations from Hugo Bergroth, a Swedish-speaking teacher at the University of Helsinki. Bergroth (1916) had attempted to explain why the speech of Swedes living in Finland was colorless, dry, and monotonous as compared with that of Swedes living in Sweden. According to him, the higher pitch of the Swedish spoken in Sweden results from speakers employing the cords in the larynx with greater vigor and energy, but the fundamental difference lies in national characteristics: the Finn is slower and sulkier than the Swede, who is more open and self-confident and has more temperament. Hakulinen thought that Bergroth's characterization applied even better to the Finnish language and to the speakers of Finnish: they speak with a relatively quiet voice, at a rather low pitch level, with little affect, with their mouths rather closed because they do not move their lips much, and with a mumbling overall style of expression arising from a lax execution of individual sounds.

It would be misleading to imply that considerations of the above kind are typical of Finns only. Similar characterizations are often heard concerning other nationalities too. It is possible that unforced flexibility relating to the uses of the mother tongue makes the efforts expended on the learning and use of foreign languages look particularly problematic, which again may result in misguided conclusions about the levels of energy required. Speaking one's mother tongue is facile, and there are normally no problems in the execution of communicative objectives, while speaking a foreign language often exposes the speaker to hardships that often arise unannounced. There is no theoretical or experimental foundation for the assumption that the speaking of some particular language is more difficult than that of another. The same basic ingredients are combined and integrated with each other differently in different languages to reach the same communicative or other goal: the ease or difficulty with which this takes place depends on how accustomed speakers are to using the elements concerned. There may be occasional dysfunctions, even in the mother tongue, but the mechanisms of change embedded in language variation will rectify the situation in no time.

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[1] The concept of nationality is highly problematic, particularly when linked up with language issues. This is not the proper place to go into the problematics of nationhood and nationality. Here it is to be taken as a vague reference to a sense of belonging together. An interesting discussion of the problem from a bilingualism viewpoint can be found in Skutnabb-Kangas 1991. The present situation in Finland should be considered against the background of the nationalist movement of the nineteenth century and the establishment of the independent nation in 1917.

Today it is not customary to refer to national characteristics when explanations are sought for aspects of communicative behavior. In the second edition of his book Hakulinen too adopts a slightly different angle. He now predicts that the ways in which Finns speak will change as a result of "alterations in the aesthetic and phonetic character of Finnish from a rustic dialectal level in a more positive direction," alterations due to the spread of a conscious speech culture among educated people. Hakulinen's main argument is that education makes people *better* speakers of a language. The same attitude is reflected, more popularly, in regular complaints that people who appear in public, such as radio or television announcers, cannot pronounce words or letters correctly. Labeling of pronunciation and communicative style in this way may be a convenient way to distinguish educated and uneducated (better and not-so-good) people (see also Milroy and Milroy 1985, pp. 29ff.). It may have an impact on the transference of communicative intentions if the label of lower education is also taken to be a signal of a lower level of intelligence.

On a more general plane, change is now preferably attributed to acculturation and socialization. This may also be what Hakulinen wants to say at a deeper level. Language behavior does not originate in what could be described as personality; instead, personality can be regarded as a product of society and culture. It is through language that an individual becomes a member of society, and language again is a medium that is necessary to create a personality for that individual as a member of society (see e.g. Halliday 1975; Halliday and Hasan 1989). In this way language also creates the boundaries for a person's communicative behavior: what there is that is not language is rather strictly bound up in the ways in which language can be used for communicative purposes.

From very early on, people are members of more than just one speech community. This linkage can take place within the mother-tongue speech community and across language boundaries (see Milroy 1987; Fasold 1990, pp. 235–38). It is quite normal for there to be a great deal of variation in the ways in which one person uses the languages or language variants at his disposal in different contexts. The vernacular acquired in childhood may have been pushed to the background by access to education because of the adoption of a standard variety of the language. Yet the vernacular may easily surface in situations where the speaker interacts with speakers of that variety, or when for one reason or another the monitoring procedures lose strict control of the speech chain. In addition, peculiar forms of communicative behavior may develop in interaction with specific groups of people. The shift from one form of expression to another mostly takes place automatically, without any conscious awareness of the change. The way in which the other party is approached is very important: a common language variety creates a bridge for further communication, while its absence may prove to be a serious handicap, though not necessarily a fatal one (see e.g. Jordan and Fuller 1975). Deborah Tannen (1986, 1989) gives numerous examples of failures that can be ascribed to a missing common "language." The destructive impact of failure may be even greater when people speaking the same language do not realize that their respective codes are only partially shared.

Misconceptions, which are rather similar to those described above in terms of national characteristics, are also found in people's observations of each other's language behavior. The intuitions that people have are not always based on how things actually are. They are easily colored by tradition, expectations, inferences, and pure belief. A good example is observations on speech rate (see Lehtonen and Sajavaara 1985). An impression of slow speech rate, for instance, may be derived not from the actual rate of speech but from morphological or morphophonemic differences between the listener's variety of the language and the speaker's. Such an impression may also be due to pauses that happen to be longer than they should be according to the (subconscious) experience of the listener. Moreover, a slow speech rate is easily confused with a slow rate of thinking, which may create serious constraints on efficient interaction. Similarly, speakers who are recognized by listeners as being fast are not necessarily any faster than others; the impression may be based on factors like those mentioned above.

2. PREREQUISITES OF INTERACTIONAL COMMUNICATION

Interactional communication is one of the fundamental activities in all human societies. What it primarily involves is attempts at negotiation about communicative and other goals (see Sajavaara 1987). A great deal of what takes place in situations of communicative interaction is not concerned with communication in the sense of transferring messages; much of it is geared to finding the ways and means necessary for the participants to make decisions concerning one another's aspirations and to make their purposes known to one another.

If the information received is found to be relevant for mutual purposes, the participants decide that they have understood one another, and very little attention is paid, in normal everyday situations, to the question of whether original intentions and purposes have been correctly transmitted from sender to receiver. This outcome can be termed communicative satisfaction: interactants have reached a state where they are satisfied with the result of their interactional endeavors. Such satisfaction is derived from a purely subjective evaluation of the way in which the interaction has been accomplished, and there is no way of knowing how correct or incorrect the evaluation is. For most purposes, however, approximations are sufficient. Mutual understanding has normally been taken as the rule, perhaps under the influence of the fact that the theoretical background of interactional communication has been dependent on traditional theories of communication; yet it may be that mutual misunderstanding is a rather general state of affairs (see Sajavaara 1987; Taylor 1992).

Communicative competence is usually described as being a combination of grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence (Canale and Swain 1980, pp. 29–31). Despite its clearly sociolinguistic starting point, the interactive nature of human communication is usually disregarded in definitions of communicative competence. Yet it is an important element in it to be able to give a critical assessment of communicative success. Language is only one of the building blocks in this process. In many situations it may be much more important to be aware, either consciously or subconsciously, of what sorts of rules and knowledge are being shared among interactants. An important role must also be assigned to the timely observation of various features present in the context of communication (for variation in interpretations, see e.g. Geertz 1983). It is possible that correct interpretations are arrived at through the capacity to solve practical problems in an appropriate way, which develops when experience with world situations and problem solving are integrated (see e.g. Sternberg and Wagner 1986). What is usually taken to be language comprehension and understanding may actually be purposeful interpretation of the status of a number of contextual parameters.

There are a large number of factors that may cause interactional communication to misfire. Language alone involves plenty of ambiguity, which may result in multiple interpretations. But it must be more often the case that misguided interpretations are derived from differences in previous experience that cannot be shared with other participants in the interactional situation. It is obvious that in foreign language contexts a misfiring of the system can easily take place as a result of a lack of shared background.

Miscommunication may also arise through conscious and purposeful manipulation of the elements in the situation. A conscious effort can be made to lead the recipient astray, mostly to make him make decisions that he would perhaps not otherwise consider under the circumstances (in many cases the outcome can be largely dependent on the perhaps unarticulated aspirations, goals, and interpretations of the person who is being manipulated). Examples abound in various types of propaganda, political argumentation, legalese, and advertising (see e.g. Andersen 1988).

Sometimes misguidance is not a result of the manipulation of the message; problems may arise from the ways in which communicators make use of the various resources available in argumentation. For communicative purposes, silence may be as important as speech (see Tannen and Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1992). It is possible that Finns can generally accept more silence than members of other Western cultural groups (Lehtonen and Sajavaara 1985). Circumspect expression tends to have positive connotations. Part of the appreciation that has been felt in Finland for President Mauno Koivisto is certainly due to his rather clumsy and discursive communicative style.

There is a great deal of variety in the ways in which interactional communication works in different cultures and subcultures. Members of a certain culture, speaking a certain language, may feel that they are poorer communicators than members of another cultural group who may appear to be more outspoken. Conceptions of this kind may arise from mere cross-cultural differences in the sequencing of communication. The fact that a Finn, for instance, does not speak in situations where other people speak should not imply that he controls the means of speech communication less efficiently than the others. Quantity of speech is seldom a good criterion of success, and subjective impressions in this respect may be highly misleading. Many Finns who think that their speech is halting and full of pauses may be totally unaware of the fact that the speech of the other party is similarly broken by phenomena that could be characterized as disfluency.

Communication and interaction management varies from speaker to speaker, from community to community, and from culture to culture. One important part of a foreign language plan is the consideration of ways and means of overcoming problems arising from a shortage of shared knowledge and common experience. It is true that cultural background knowledge has always been an integral part of foreign language programs, but what has been taken to be culture has normally been restricted to the rather superficial features of everyday life in the target culture. Learners should also be given an idea of how the aspects of communicative interaction described above affect communicative success.

3. SELF-CONCEPT AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE SELF-CONCEPT

Members of many nationalities consider themselves to be poor language learners. This sentiment is common in Finland. The idea is also regularly expressed in jokes about the foreign language problems experienced by well-known citizens. Conversely, fluent command of foreign languages is often highly appreciated. Members of Finland's Finnish-speaking population have always, consciously or subconsciously, compared themselves with their Swedish-speaking neighbors, who appear to be more fluent in the major European languages, many of which are closely related to their own (with rather obvious positive transfer effects at the early stages of learning; see e.g. Ringbom 1986). Moreover, a large proportion of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland has always been more directly exposed to cross-cultural interaction than have their Finnish neighbors. Lehtonen (1992, p. 22) has pointed out that the centuries-long dependence of Finns on their Swedish neighbors as mediators of cultural phenomena has left a lasting impression on Finnish self-concept.

Native speakers of English often consider themselves to be inferior language learners, which may simply be due to a lack of motivation resulting from the well-known fact that English has largely taken the role of the language of international communication. It is possible to rely on English alone for communicative purposes.

Impressions of success or failure may also result from the hardships of trying to cope with the foreign language in the formal classroom situation; it is hardly possible that some nationalities by definition should be better classroom learners than others. The gap between classroom experience and actual uses of foreign languages for communication can vary from country to country. Finland, located on the periphery of the European continent, used to be seriously handicapped by long distances, but now the situation is radically different, particularly for the younger generation.

Learners cannot divorce their own personalities from the learning process. According to Korpinen (1990, p. 1), learning as a global process involves the whole personality. When learning a foreign language the learner also acquires information about himself as a language learner, about the importance of the language for his personal endeavors, and about the potential uses of the language proficiency to be achieved. Korpinen points out that from a cognitive point of view, self-concept is an integral element in language proficiency; learning means an expansion of the various dimensions of the self and a reorganization of the existing dimensions. The resulting self-concept can be seen to be an interpreter of previous experiences, a grid that distills the decisions about which knowledge, which skills, and which experiences are meaningful. This again has an impact on what the learner considers to be worthwhile to learn. Korpinen also emphasizes the importance of subjective expectations to the learning outcome: learning is possible only if the learner has a positive image of himself as a learner.

In short, learning is dependent on self-concept, and self-concept develops through learning. Besides self-concept as a general category, it is also possible to posit what might be called foreign language self-concept, as has been done by Laine (1988; further developed in Laine and Pihko 1991; see also Kristiansen 1992, pp. 37–39).

The setting for the learner is delimited by the experiences, information, and skills he has been able to acquire. In the process of learning, the learner primarily reacts to the parameters of his own setting, which means that learning can never be a direct product of teaching. The prospect of being able to reach a meaningful learning outcome that serves a useful purpose is of great importance. Such a conception of meaningfulness must, however, be internalized by the learner through personal experience rather than exposure to some formally stated objectives of foreign language policies. The foreign language classroom is not usually very conducive to the acquisition of fluency, which may have repercussions for foreign language self-concept. This impression may be reinforced by the generally accepted conception of Finns as poor foreign language acquirers. At the same time, reference to national character can also serve as a mitigating factor: failure can be ascribed to that instead of to the learner's own poor performance. The extreme case is that the poorest classroom learners are largely incompetent even to understand what is going on (Kristiansen 1992).

Self-concept and foreign language self-concept are not absolute factors. Learners correlate their experiences with language learning and with their assumptions about the levels of language proficiency they themselves are able to attain. Research on foreign language communication apprehension among students of English and students of social science at the University of Jyväskylä implies that students majoring in English—most of whom have been admitted after ten years of rather intensive study of English, through a strict screening process concentrating mainly on English language proficiency—rate their proficiency in English much lower than students of social science rate theirs (see Lehtonen et al. 1985). It is not surprising, then, that students majoring in English also suffer from higher states of anxiety relating to the use of English than students of social science do. They themselves set most of the hurdles, which may have diverse, and even clearly contradictory, effects: some learners work even more to overcome the hardships they experience, while others give up under the pressure of "ever-increasing" demands.

4. LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Spolsky (1989) lists a total of seventy-four conditions for second language learning when asking who learns how much of what language under what conditions. This question can serve as the basis for a classification of the problems that the foreign language learner is faced with and that constitute the working ground of research into foreign language learning. One possible classification is as follows:

- the characteristics of the target language (as against the language or languages the learner already knows)
- the nature of the learning process
- the nature of the learning outcome
- differences between learners
- the impact of the learning context

Each one of these categories comprises a large number of factors that can assist or constrain the internalization of foreign languages. Even without any further analysis, it is apparent that success or failure in second language acquisition can never be explained on the basis of some straightforward factor: language proficiency is always a function of multiple variables that are interrelated in a complex way. Spolsky's (1989) chapter headings are illustrative: knowing a language; knowing how to use a language; structures and functions; measuring knowledge of a second language; the psycholinguistic basis; ability and personality; the linguistic basis; the social context; attitudes and motivation; opportunities for second language learning; and formal instruction.

Language acquisition is a linguistic problem only in part; linguistic aspects interact with phenomena that are social and psychological. The work by Bates and MacWhinney (1989) and their associates on what they label the Competition Model implies that we have barely got started in the analysis of the ways in which various linguistic, pragmatic, and other phenomena interact in language acquisition and on-line processing. The empirical research they have been involved in shows that a large number of factors participate in the processes differently at different stages of language learning.

It looks quite probable also that proficiency can be reached by more than one path. Considering the number of variables involved, it comes as no surprise that there is a great deal of variation in the ways in which people learn to use languages, both the mother tongue and languages learned later. Some of the variables have an impact on the internalization of language items, while others primarily relate to the rate of learning (see Ellis 1985, pp. 16–18). Most of the data about language learning has been concerned with the latter kind of information, whereas ways in which aspects of syntax, for instance, are ordered as systematic elements of the language code remain largely unexplored. Unfortunately, in a fair amount of the research into foreign language learning, the rate has been confused with the route (cf. Ellis 1985, p. 15).

Despite the common stereotypes, it is not possible to assume that language learning as such, whether of the mother tongue or of a second language, is more difficult for speakers of one language than for speakers of another. As was pointed out above, it is difficult to envisage a differentiation of human language-learning capacity in terms of language and nationality. There are differences in the rates and routes by which certain types of categories of language codes or certain language functions are acquired by learners of different languages (see e.g. Bates and MacWhinney 1989). In the same way, certain foreign languages are easier, initially at least, to speakers of certain other languages—for example, English to speakers of Swedish as against speakers of Finnish. The early stages of learning are radically easier for Swedes, mainly because of the similarity between the two languages. A Swede "knows" a fair amount of English without having ever studied it, which means that a Swedish learner can initially make use of language input much more efficiently (see Ringbom 1986). Later on, the advantage is leveled off.

The mother tongue is acquired at the same time with socialization and acculturation. Language learning is similar to the learning of various other behavioral codes, which are acquired when the person becomes a member of the community. For the most part it is rather difficult to draw the line between language and culture. Language is an integral element of the process by which a Finn becomes Finnish. Later languages are acquired through a similar process if these languages are used in naturalistic situations for meaningful and purposeful communicative interaction with other people. The acquisition of such languages does not seem to be much different from the acquisition of first languages if learners participate in communicative interaction, and if speakers of the target-language community accept newcomers as full members and these new members are willing to accept their new roles. Theoretically, there is no limit to how many languages a person can acquire in this way. The impact of the starting age has been one of the hot issues throughout the years. The most recent survey by Michael Long (1991) implies that after the age of six it is not possible, for many people at least, to acquire nativelike competence in a second language.

The context where second/foreign languages are to be learned is also important in another way. The example comes again from Finland. Finns often speak of Finland as being an exceptional country in that it has two languages. (To be exact, there are more, i.e. Lappish and Romany, but their speakers are few.) For most Finns the state of affairs looks fairly unilingual and highly unicultural. Despite the two languages, there is practically no cultural diversity in the country: speakers of Finnish do not differ culturally from speakers of Swedish. Finns only rarely run into situations where it is necessary to understand somebody who speaks and behaves differently. Moreover, even the link between the Finnish majority and the minorities has been rather loose. Speakers of Swedish have been either members of the wealthier stratum of society or small farmers and fishermen in totally Swedish-speaking isolated communities along the coasts; there used to be no reason for a Finnish speaker to socialize with them. The interface between the speakers of the two languages in a few major cities along the coasts was rather thin; normally it worked out that Swedish speakers became bilingual while Finnish speakers acquired a rather restricted command of Swedish. Lappish people lived far north in their own communities, with a minimum of contact with the Finnish majority. Gypsies—that is, speakers of Romany—had a lifestyle of their own, quite different from that of the Finns. That lifestyle was recognized, though not necessarily accepted, as an exotic ingredient in an otherwise homogeneous society, and the language served as a secret code for intragroup communication. Contacts with other countries used to be restricted to occasional visits by wandering Russian merchants, most of whom were, moreover, speakers of Finnish. The situation has not improved much in recent years. Finns do travel a great deal, but the majority go to places like the Canary Islands—to converse with other Finns in restaurants owned by Finns and having all-Finnish menus. It is yet to be seen what the impact of the experiences of the Interrail generations will be.

The status of the language to be learned is also of importance for language acquisition. In naturalistic situations its status is dependent on various kinds of sociopsychological factors, and the success of the learning process is largely geared to functional criteria. In foreign language learning, learners are known to have different attitudes toward different languages. In Finland, French (for instance) is mostly studied for integrative reasons, and therefore the teaching of French is considered to be more pleasant than the teaching of some other major languages. The attractiveness of English as a foreign language is in part derived from its integral liaison with present-day youth culture. At the same time, some languages suffer from the effects of negative attributions; this is largely the case with Swedish in Finnish-speaking areas of Finland (see Nikki 1992). Russian has experienced much the same fate.

The adoption and use of varieties of the mother tongue to supplement the vernacular originally adopted at home from parents, close relatives, and peers are steered by similar factors. The most important of these varieties is the standard one, which is largely controlled through education. Irrespective of the nature of the teaching effort, the product of conscious internalization and systematic error correction remains highly dependent on the learner's awareness of the usefulness of each type of variety. It is the realization—maybe not necessarily conscious—of the social meanings of the available language varieties that is the prerequisite for their use.

5. FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The overall product of foreign language teaching is surprisingly good, considering the constraints of the formal teaching situation, but it is mostly inferior to the product of naturalistic second language learning. Yet it is worth remembering that in some respects foreign language learners may be far superior to average native speakers.

Languages seem to have always been acquired more easily and more widely without instruction than with it. There are many people all over the world who have learned to speak more than one language through exposure to them in their environment, for the simple reason that bilingual and multilingual communities are the rule rather than the exception.

The major problem in formal foreign language teaching is the attainment by the pupil of a fluent command of functional (mainly spoken) aspects of the target language under the constraints of a limited number of contact periods. Study of the formal elements and separate lexical items of the language—which often constitutes the backbone of foreign language programs, even under the guise of communicative approaches—does not result in fluency in naturalistic situations of language use. The small number of teaching periods offers insufficient exposure to various types of language use situations, and therefore the communicative needs arising in everyday situations cannot be met.

At school, learning is often severed from meaningful activity typical of everyday life (see Sajavaara 1984). In naturalistic language acquisition the child sets off activity that is necessary for the progress of acquisition (see e.g. Bates et al. 1983). It is as if the activity were based on a highly efficient consideration of needs as against available means. The acquisition takes place subconsciously, for the most part; it is steered by the learner's observations of the environment, while the role of verbally formulated rules and metalinguistic knowledge is minimal. Subconscious learning is geared to the product's meaningfulness to the learner. The learner's self is directly involved in the activity, and the learner often identifies himself with the persons whose activity is the target of his observation. It is obvious that affective factors play an important role in all acquisition of this type. Conscious verbalization of rules depends on the learner's capacity for processing formal knowledge, which develops rather late, mostly in early puberty.

In the formal school setting, it is the curriculum—possibly the national plan—and the teacher that control the way in which learning is supposed to take place (see, however, Ahlroos and Muilu 1989; for an account of the implementation of a national foreign language plan, see Nikki 1992). There is little room, mostly, for learner-centered internalization through independent personal observation. The communication that occurs in the language classroom is only rarely natural interpersonal communication (see Sajavaara 1989); forms tend to assume a role that is more important than necessary for the transference of messages or other functions of language; the teacher and students rarely have anything important to communicate to each other; content that learners might recognize as significant and meaningful for themselves is minimal or nonexistent. The chances to use language for purposeful activity are often well below the students' capacity in terms of both their knowledge and their proficiency. Language becomes a plaster model and communication a mere game; the learning context is not intellectually demanding. The outcome may be a total loss of whatever motivation there has been, and the attitude toward language teaching becomes thoroughly adverse. The natural potential for language learning is lost.

Naturalistic communication in foreign language teaching situations may also be curtailed by the models adopted by teachers. As a result of years in the classroom, the teacher's use of the foreign language may have become confined to the functionally and intellectually narrow dimensions of the classroom; moreover, teachers often lack the means to brush up their own communicative skills in the language they are teaching.

Another important factor is how the productivity of language teaching is evaluated. In examinations students are usually castigated rather severely for deviations in language use that are labeled as errors. This feedback is mostly restricted to the structure of the language or the lexicon, and it is only rarely possible for the assessor to give an appraisal of other features such as the overall construction of the message in cultural terms. In examinations, furthermore, learners are usually treated as a group, which downplays the important role of personal considerations.

Language and language use are, however, an integral part of personality and are deeply associated with a person's sovereign position as an individual among other individuals. Therefore, the ways in which the person is willing to function in the foreign language are decisively linked up with his views of his own self and his behavior as a member of the language community. The degree to which a "self" achieves can only rarely be evaluated. Feedback on truly positive achievement is given only infrequently. An overall norm can apply only to a group of language users, while in functional terms it is much more difficult to find criteria that bear equally on all individuals. The "right" answers relate to grammar and vocabulary, and therefore the grades for proficiency are mostly based on the command of categories in these areas as evaluated by means of pencil-and-paper tests. It comes as no surprise that good achievers in foreign languages are students who also learn other things easily—as measured by means of tests used in the school context. Moreover, there is not full agreement on what it means for the learning outcome to be successful, and the situation is seriously complicated by the variation found in the language produced by second language learners (see e.g. Tarone 1988).

Language proficiency, whatever it is, can be reached through several alternative channels. There is no one right way, even though discussions about language teaching methodologies often seem to imply that there is. Moreover, the rate of learning varies considerably from learner to learner (see e.g. Ellis 1985, pp. 16–18).

It is evident from what has been said that a fair amount of information is available about the conditions under which language learning may be successful, and about the handicaps that may prevent learners from reaching a successful outcome. Yet surprisingly little is known about the actual process through which the regularities of a language are internalized. The universal-grammar hypothesis, which was developed in the wake of Chomsky's generative theories, has received a fair amount of support among researchers (see e.g. Cook 1991, pp. 116ff.). It is based on the premise that all languages are shaped by what is called universal grammar, which sets the general principles on which the languages are constituted. There is also some evidence that certain regularities making up part of a language system are picked up by learners in a certain order (Pienemann 1986; Pienemann and Johnston 1987). The question of what the impact of teaching is remains open (for a review of the problem, see Lightbown 1991). Today it is no longer heretical to state that certain learning problems derive from the characteristics of the language to be learned as against those of the learner's first and other languages. This means that, without adhering to a contrastive hypothesis, as was done earlier, the existence of crosslinguistic problems has been acknowledged by researchers (see e.g. Kellerman and Sharwood Smith 1986; Odlin 1989; Ringbom 1991).

In the process of language acquisition, what is linguistic is linked up with sociopsychological phenomena to create a multifaceted series of procedures whose product alone is observable. In the school context this set of phenomena is also integrated with various educational factors. It is extremely difficult to predict the full impact of all these interrelated elements. It seems, however, that in the formal learning situation the most important factor is the total amount of contact with the language to be learned, which is normally discussed under the label of input. In a way it seems to be of secondary importance what exactly the nature of that contact is. The productivity of such activity can, however, be stepped up by designing procedures for the classroom that meet the requirement of meaningfulness (for the learner) in the best way possible (see e.g. Di Pietro 1987; Fanselow 1987; Wright 1989; Nunan 1989; Stevick 1989) and that make it possible for the teacher and the pupils to build up their communicative activities on their own personalities and personal aspirations and, at the same time, participate in multifunctional target-oriented interaction. As is pointed out by Widdowson (1990, pp. 193–95), "Individual enterprise can only be meaningful if it is bounded," and "we should not assume that language using behavior is necessarily effective as language learning behavior"; the task of language pedagogy is to create "a framework of some kind, some set of bearings to enable learners to find their way." The mere copying of naturalistic situations of language use is not sufficient.

6. FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AS AN INSTITUTION

The way in which the overall product of foreign language teaching takes shape is also affected by the constitution of national foreign language policies, or the national foreign language plan, if it exists. In Finland a considerable proportion of all educational resources is spent on foreign language teaching; it is possible that the proportion is higher than in any other Western country. Since Finland is officially bilingual, it has been considered necessary to make the study of the second official language obligatory for the whole generation of students. For most speakers of Finnish, learning the second language, Swedish, means learning a language that is as foreign as any other non-native language; Swedish is not used as a means of regular communication outside rather restricted areas along the coasts. (Steady contacts with the other Nordic countries have always been used as an additional argument for the compulsory status of Swedish in the school curriculum.) At the same time, it has also been considered necessary to offer a relatively large variety of major foreign languages, because neither of the national ones is spoken outside Finland on any large scale. When the Finnish comprehensive school was launched in the 1960s, it was also decided that foreign-language teaching would start in the third grade at the age of nine.

All this means that since the early 1970s, the entire school generations have studied at least two non-native languages. One more language may be added before the age of sixteen, and another one in the gymnasium (high school). Courses in non-native languages are also compulsory in vocational education. All university degrees involve—in addition to the second domestic language—foreign language requirements in one or two foreign languages, depending on the degree program.

Outside the formal educational system, there are a large number of institutions of different kinds that offer voluntary language education that serves a variety of objectives, ranging from language study as a mere hobby to highly efficient professionally oriented training. The productivity of this activity suffers from the vagueness of learner targets, the large size and heterogeneity of the study groups, differences in starting levels, a lack of continuity and articulation, and, in regrettably many cases, the fact that money making is the only object of the course supply.

Productivity can be discussed in terms of the entire educational system, on the one hand, or in terms of a specific group of learners or a learning individual, on the other.

It takes a great deal of resources and effort to raise the productivity of the entire educational system. Educational goals, societal needs, and various learner-related prerequisites are not the only criteria for implementation; decision making is often largely political. Political decisions that affect the outcome of foreign language teaching in Finland include, among other things, the total quota of foreign language education in Finnish schools, the number of languages to be taught, the specific languages included in the foreign language plan, the starting age, and the existence and composition of the school-leaving (matriculation) examination. When, for instance, the decision to make the second national language compulsory in the comprehensive school was originally made, the criteria used varied a great deal, also in terms of the ways in which the objectives of foreign language teaching were defined, including the meaning of the concept of language proficiency. The ultimate decision was a political bargain between two major political parties.[2]

In the Finnish context it makes sense to offer an extensive foreign language program. Neither one of the two major languages of the country is spoken outside Finland to any marked degree, and with the exception of Scandinavia, all contacts with other countries depend on a knowledge of international languages. A totally different kind of question, however, is that of which languages should be made available to the entire generation and which languages should be offered, and to what degree, at what stage of the educational career.

Many of the arguments used in Finland have been haphazard or tendentious, often based on rather narrow goals pursued by various pressure or other groups. For instance, the argument that Swedish—or Scandinavian, as it is called for purposes like this—is a common language in Scandinavia is useless to the average Finn, who does not normally deal with Scandinavian neighbors; even if he does, his experience is often that the inter-Scandinavian lingua franca is English. The fact that a quarter of Finnish foreign trade is with Germany does not imply that one out of every four schoolchildren in Finland should study German.

Assessment of future needs is often decisive in decision making. When the idea that West and East Germany might perhaps be conglomerated was first mentioned, there was a sudden upsurge in the demand for tuition in German, because the unification of Germany was expected, perhaps correctly, to result in the increased importance of German in international communication. Yet there are numerous examples in the world of a mismatch between the international communicative value of a language, on the one hand, and the number of its speakers and the political importance of the country where it is spoken, on the other.

The rise of English as an international language provides us with a remarkable example of the reverse situation: the English language and English language teaching have been purposefully employed as a means of power politics (see Phillipson 1992). It is also well known that the French have assigned an important role to the French language as regards France's position in world politics. (In Finland, Finnish was an important tool in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the creation of the Finnish nation and the establishment of a concept of nationhood and nationality.)

Most of the public discussion of the Finnish national foreign language program has concerned the specific languages that should be included in the curriculum. There has been much less talk about the overall constitution of the language program. Yet whatever decisions are made, it is essential that they be made on the basis of a careful and circumspect analysis and articulation of needs and objectives, also from the learner perspective. In Finland, the individual-learner perspective has recently been taken up by Nikki (1992).

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[2] A new curriculum will be adopted in the Finnish school system in 1993. The preparatory work for it aroused a heated discussion about the status of non-native languages in the curriculum, especially the compulsoriness of Swedish for Finnish speakers. The Swedish People's party, which was represented in the cabinet—it is largely what might be called a language-bound party—was opposed to the idea of making Swedish optional along with the other non-native languages, and the proposal was never formally tabled at a cabinet meeting. The only outcome was that the number of hours devoted to Swedish was cut.

The constitution of educational value systems can be considered from the viewpoint of classical humanism, societal reconstructionism, and individualistic progressivism (see Clark 1987, pp. 90ff.). The traditional humanistic approach concentrates on the "promotion of generalizable intellectual capabilities" and aims at the "maintenance and transmission of knowledge, culture and standards of one generation to another." Reconstructionism purports to achieve social change "through education planned to lead towards certain agreed goals"; it lays "emphasis on the practical relevance of the curriculum to the social goals of the nation." The conceptions highlighted in progressivism center around the "development of the individual as a whole person"; the learner is supposed to be responsible for his own development, and his capacity for learning how to learn is promoted. Historically, this means a move from subject-centered content-driven curricula through goal-centered approaches over to process-oriented learning-centered practices. The humanistic approach emphasizes knowledge, the reconstructionist one derives goals from needs, and the progressivist one calls attention to the experiential aspects of learning. It is only recently that a discussion of these questions has been launched in Finland (Voutilainen et al. 1989; Lehtinen et al. 1989; for foreign language teaching, Kohonen 1987, 1988). In the last few decades Finnish education has largely been built upon an egalitarian ideology of social change. Yet there seems to have been a certain conflict with the general opinion, which has always been strongly colored by ideas derived from what Clark calls traditional humanism. Learner-centered views are only making their approach, and it is obvious that the process of change can only be extremely slow.

An ideal state of affairs could perhaps be achieved by combining the three approaches in a rational way. Planning could produce a general framework within which learners could make their individual choices. This framework could also be used to guarantee the preservation of cultural values.

In foreign language teaching (see Clark 1987, p. 95), the humanistic approach has emphasized the importance of capacities such as memorization, systematic analysis and classification, synthesis, and judgment. The languages offered are chosen simply by reference to their cultural prestige; such languages are available as are necessary for a "cultured" person to learn. The syllabus, which is determined before the course, is structurally oriented, and it calls attention to culturally valuable texts. Foreign language teaching that aims at social change is expected to "promote social, intranational and international unity and tolerance through enabling pupils to communicate with other speech communities." The languages to be taught are chosen on the basis of their importance to various communities in the country or their significance to the country's political and economic concerns. The syllabus content is "derived from an analysis of the learners' objective communicative needs" before the outset of the program. In the progressivist approach, language proficiency is considered a means of personal development. Language offers a medium for the establishment of wider networks of personal relationships; learning how to learn also involves learning how to learn a language. The languages to be learned depend on personal aspirations and interests. The syllabus is created in collaboration with the learners as a "series of activities and tasks of a realistic communicative nature" (see also Prabhu 1987).

The Finnish foreign language program is clearly based on the definition of societal needs and objectives. The importance of the study of national languages and Swedish has been emphasized primarily from the societal perspective: all Finns should be able to communicate with each other; a Scandinavian language (i.e. Swedish) establishes a bridge over to the Nordic sister countries. The reasoning behind the study of the other languages calls attention to the management of the commercial and economic interests of the country. Not much attention is paid any longer to the preservation of cultural values, a trend that is also reflected in the almost total disappearance of classical languages. The individual learner's objectives also play a secondary role. Kohonen (1987, 1988) has attempted to bring in an experiential learning orientation and to emphasize the educational criteria instead of the training ones (Kohonen 1988, p. 199).

The Finnish program gives equal importance to English, French, German, and Russian, but in practice English has been the language chosen by the large majority of pupils since the introduction of the comprehensive school in the 1960s. Statements are often heard in public that the overall foreign language proficiency of Finns has been narrowed by the status of English as the favorite language. However, since Swedish is always the second language in the compulsory program, there is no room for the other languages. An attempt has recently been made to improve the situation by offering English as an extra language to students who start with a language other than English.

The belief that the overall language proficiency of Finns is narrower now than it was earlier is based on a misperception. Before foreign languages were made compulsory for the entire school generation through the introduction of the comprehensive school in the 1960s, foreign languages were studied by children whose parents could afford to give them an education in the secondary school. A moderate level—mainly in the culturally relevant skills of reading and writing—was reached by those who went on to the gymnasium (high school) and passed the matriculation examination at the end of it, but they made up only a small proportion of those who were initially admitted into the secondary school. Since the teaching method was based on grammar and translation, there was little room for practical language skills. Yet many of those who got through found out later, when they were faced with real-life situations of language use, that oral skills developed rather rapidly. Swedish was studied throughout the eight years of secondary education. The first non-national foreign language was introduced in the second year of the secondary school, which meant seven years of study; until the late 1950s this language was German for most pupils, but English gained in popularity very rapidly, and it was in the early 1960s that

English overtook German as the first foreign language in the matriculation examinations. The other languages have always played a minor role.

It is futile to try to estimate the totality of a nation's foreign language proficiency. (It is also important to remember that for most Finnish-speaking Finns, Swedish is like a foreign language, and the proportion of truly bilingual people among Finnish speakers is relatively small, whereas the large majority of the Swedish speakers are bilingual.) It is safe to assume in any case that the only language whose command in Finland has been reduced from what it was some thirty or forty years ago is German. The entire school generation never studied Swedish before the comprehensive school, and it cannot be assumed that the proportion of those Finnish speakers who know Swedish well is any smaller than it was earlier. A certain level of English has been achieved by more than 90 percent of each generation, and many of those who have not been exposed to English in formal teaching have picked the language up elsewhere. The number of those who know English well is high, several thousands among each generation of school leavers. (Every year about a thousand Finnish high school students spend a year as exchange students in English-speaking countries; in the mid-1950s, for instance, the total number of matriculating school leavers was just above six thousand.) The number of those who have studied French and Russian has always been small and has remained relatively unchanged.

The general nature of foreign language proficiency has changed radically in the last fifteen to twenty years. The ability to cope with naturalistic situations of language use in a foreign language—particularly English, but also other languages—is much better. The interpretation of high-culture texts and the appreciation of cultural values may have suffered in the humanistic sense, but television, Interrail travel, and popular culture transfer the undercurrents of what goes on in Europe and the world to the periphery of the European continent much faster than ever before. Culturally, this means both a narrowing and a huge expansion. In the humanistic sense this may be a loss—although the same proportion of the population may still go on appreciating cultural values, actually having even better vista points than their predecessors—while in the progressivist sense there is an immense gain. Television alone provides for a large quantity of cultural issues besides giving extensive input in a number of foreign languages (dubbing is rare in Finland; subtitles are the rule).

In present Finnish foreign language education, the importance of the first foreign language is overemphasized; in public discussions the success or failure of the entire system is normally tied to the early starting age. The impact of other factors such as course intensity and learner motivation, which may be more important, is mostly ignored. The starting age may be of secondary importance for the outcome of the entire learning process, particularly in a system that allows for a minimal number of contact hours through most of the learning career (see Singleton 1989).

The requirement of two compulsory languages for everybody is heavy. The quota of foreign languages in the overall school curriculum is also expanded through the addition of English as the third language if the first language is one other than English. One obligatory language in the comprehensive school might be a more reasonable requirement for the whole generation—in accordance with the LINGUA plans in the European Community (Van Els and Van Hest 1990). More languages could be offered, depending on study goals and personal interests. The language program could be made more flexible by offering intensive language courses whenever the study program or the professional career requires the addition of new foreign languages—when a certain new language becomes essential, when the career takes a turn that makes proficiency in several languages necessary, when the person concerned is clearly motivated to study languages, or when he or she wants to become a foreign language specialist. This means, for instance, the introduction of degree programs in which expertise in foreign languages can be combined with specializations in other types of disciplines such as social policy, law, and medicine. So far such degree combinations have been rather rare—with a few exceptions: language degree programs in schools of economics and business administration, training of translators and interpreters—but it is obvious that expertise in foreign language communication is becoming more important in many of the services in present-day society (see Sajavaara 1990a). Most of the higher education available in foreign languages is built upon purely humanistic endeavors in the framework described above.

The major objective of foreign language education in the comprehensive school should be learning how to learn a second language in accordance with the progressivist approach. The emphasis should be on learning experience (see e.g. Kohonen 1988). The aim in language learning in the comprehensive school should be positive language-learning experience. The particular language in which such experience is achieved is of secondary importance, and one language is sufficient for such a purpose (particularly if foreign language learning is supported by mother-tongue education). A prerequisite for such positive experience is that a sufficient amount of time be devoted to the study of the foreign language; it is necessary for pupils to reach the threshold level essential for a reasonable level of interaction, and for that the minimum requirement is a daily link with the language studied. At present, the comprehensive school curriculum does not make this possible. For the overall product in terms of the national plan, a sufficient amount of time in one language might be much more important than too little time in two or more languages.

The national foreign language program also becomes a trade union issue; the question of which languages are offered at what stage and to what degree is reflected in the employment of foreign language teachers. The status quo in Finland has been the result, at least in part, of active policies by the association of foreign language teachers. A reorganization of foreign language programs does not necessarily mean less work for teachers; the outcome might be quite the reverse, if the reorganization resulted in a higher level of motivation and goal-orientedness among language learners.

7. CONCLUSION

Modern foreign language teaching is characterized by a centrality of communicative skills. In communication it is not always important what language is being used. The goal of communication can be reached even without a shared language, if the interactants are in agreement about their mutual willingness to try to interpret each other's intentions. Foreign language teaching should always have this as its starting point; a foreigner should always be met with open eyes, whatever language he speaks and however different from our own his culture-bound behavior happens to be.

The success of foreign language communication starts with the speaker-hearer's view of himself as a communicator. It is very important to be able to see one's true nature in the international context, and to understand the impact of one's communicative activities without being misguided by a variety of myths, misconceptions, and stereotypes. Therefore, the building up of a foreign language plan begins with the definition of general educational goals, and it is particularly important to remember the role of mother-tongue education and other communication-bound aspects of education in the establishment of the right kind of setting for the learning of foreign languages.

People have to learn first to accept themselves as participants in culture-bound communicative activities and then to accept their interlocutors. Only then can they be expected to learn how to understand each other's intentions. Understanding is the important seed of true communicative competence, but it cannot be achieved if all attention is focused on language alone.

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LANGUAGE POLICY AND LANGUAGE TEACHING POLICY IN FINLAND

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1. LANGUAGE POLICY AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING POLICY

The crucial role of language for individuals, social groups, and states has made it important for states to define national language policies. Depending on their internal linguistic situation, the relative political power of different linguistic groups, views on language rights and language equality, and other similar factors, states may choose to promote a policy of a unilingual, bilingual, or multilingual society. This general language policy, whether it has explicit statutory legitimation (as in Canada and Finland) or implicit social legitimation by tradition (as in the United States), is one of the major determinants of a nation's language teaching policy. Another major determinant is the nation's political and economic orientation toward other nations, which partly explains clear shifts in language teaching policy in some countries, especially after World War II. The term *foreign language teaching policy* refers to the plans and practical measures undertaken to meet a country's needs for people with knowledge of foreign languages. The need to teach citizens to understand and use either a second or a foreign language arises from language contacts both within the country and with other countries.

Systematic attempts to define a national policy of foreign language teaching are of relatively recent origin. The growing need for such a policy is due to a number of developments. The fact that the teaching of foreign languages has expanded to encompass larger sections of the population including both younger and adult learners means that language teaching has become more institutionalized. It has become more organized and systematic, which means that roles and tasks have been specified in greater detail. Language teaching is not the activity of individual teachers only. It is a system of activities at several levels. In order to understand language teaching in all its complexity, it is necessary to be aware of its various levels and subsystems and of their interrelationships. It is also necessary to relate language teaching to its broader educational and societal context.

International organizations have contributed to exploring problems related to defining national language teaching policies. Two seminars sponsored by the UNESCO Institute for Education in the 1960s addressed problems related to an early start of foreign language learning (Stern 1967). Since the early 1960s the Council of Europe has actively worked for the improvement of foreign language teaching in Europe.

Through a number of seminars, symposia, and projects (Trim et al. 1980), the council's work has stimulated foreign language teaching in member countries and beyond. More recently, the final act of the Helsinki Accords (1975) commits the signatory states "to encourage the study of foreign languages and civilization as an important means of expanding communication among peoples."

In the United States the growing enthusiasm for teaching foreign languages in elementary schools (FLES), the National Defense Education Act (1958) enacted in the aftermath of Sputnik, and the Bilingual Education Act (1968) all encouraged the expansion of language teaching. Quite soon enrollments dropped, and many colleges and universities stopped requiring a foreign language for admission. A commission on foreign languages and international studies was set up by President Jimmy Carter in 1978, and its report, *Strength through Wisdom*, was published the following year. The commission reviewed the current situation and made a number of recommendations to improve it. In Finland a national commission (Committee Report 1979:60) outlined a comprehensive plan for foreign language teaching policy for the next few decades.

As linguistic conditions and social systems differ, foreign language teaching policy may range from an explicit, detailed, and binding document to implicit tradition. Thus, each country will have to decide what criteria its foreign language teaching policy has to meet.

It is obvious that even countries where some "language of wider communication" is spoken will find that there is a need to have some knowledge of other languages. The first stage in defining a foreign language teaching policy usually consists of assessing the country's need for people with the requisite type and extent of knowledge of different languages. Several studies conducted in Sweden in the early 1960s (e.g. Dahllöf 1963) were among the first systematic attempts at needs assessment. Since then a number of needs assessments have been carried out in several countries. Typically, they have dealt with language needs in business and industry (e.g. Emmans et al. 1974; BOTB 1979). Recently, more detailed methods have been developed for identifying the needs of people learning foreign languages (Ricterich and Chancerel 1980).

One important decision concerns the degree of choice made available to students. Should all students be required to study a foreign language irrespective of their motivation and linguistic ability? Should they all study the same language for the same number of years, have the same number of lessons per week, and pursue essentially the same objectives, or should there be different options on these points? Some countries (e.g. Norway and Sweden) have decided in favor of making the first language the same for all students, whereas some other countries (e.g. Finland and, more recently, Estonia) offer students a choice of the first language (for recent developments, see other chapters in this volume).

Another major area for planning is related to continuity in language teaching and learning. The Finnish commission (Committee Report 1979:60) outlined in broad terms the general approach of teaching and the general progression of objectives at different levels of the educational system. Such an outline is designed to improve articulation between the different types and levels of educational institutions that provide language learning services.

Foreign language teaching policy also has to tackle the quantitative and qualitative targets of language teaching. Thus, it may be found useful to estimate how many people will need to know particular languages and what kind of knowledge they will need to have.

After the scope and general orientation of language teaching have been determined, it is necessary to set up an efficient administration and organization to take care of the initial and in-service education of language teachers, to promote syllabus design and materials production, and to make language teaching services available from compulsory education to adult education (Strevens 1977).

The system of language teaching is a complex whole. Its successful performance requires continuous research, development, and evaluation as well as a close link between theory and practice. Foreign language teaching policy is designed to coordinate all these activities and to help language teaching become a self-correcting system.

2. NATIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHING POLICY PLANNING IN FINLAND

2.1. Overview

Finland's official language policy is embodied in a constitutional law that made Finnish and Swedish the national languages of the new republic. Other laws stipulate the linguistic status of municipalities and the language proficiency required of civil servants. The Same language (the language of the some four thousand members of the autochthonous minority) has also been gaining increasing recognition. In the Same region the language can be taught either as a mother tongue or as a second language. It can also be used as the language of instruction. Since the beginning of 1992, Same can be used in the Same region for all official business.

That general language proficiency is a matter of national interest in Finland is shown by the fact that there have been altogether seven national commissions, set up by either the cabinet or the Ministry of Education, whose specific mission has been to draw up proposals for national language policy and language teaching policy. These committees/commissions are as follows:

- Commission on Language Training (Committee Report 1964:A 12)—a plan for training interpreters and translators

- Committee on Language Rights (Committee Report 1971:B 13)—a plan for measures that safeguard the language rights of language minorities, especially the Swedish-speaking minority

- Committee on Diversification of Language Proficiency (Committee Report 1972:A 22)—a plan to improve the provision and to increase the study of less widely studied languages, especially Russian

- Committee on Language Teaching Policy (Committee Report 1979:60)—a mission to propose a comprehensive national plan for language teaching policy in Finland

- Committee for Non-European Cultures and Languages (Committee Report 1986:1)—a plan for research on and study of non-European languages and cultures, especially at the university level

- Committee on European Languages and Cultures (Committee Report 1991:6)—a comprehensive plan for research on and study of European languages after the major changes in the European context

- Commission for the Development of Language Teaching (Committee Report 1992:16)—a plan for improving the quality of language teaching using innovative ideas such as immersion teaching and content-based language teaching

In addition to these "blue-ribbon" committees, there have been dozens of national task forces that have addressed issues related to the development of language teaching provision (e.g. the obligatory study of foreign languages at universities by all students) and the development of curricula. Since the major reforms of the educational system that began in the late 1960s, three or four national curricula have been prepared and adopted for foreign languages.

Having been personally involved in three of these blue-ribbon commissions, and in practically all recent curricular task forces, I have become increasingly critical of the usefulness of frequent policy documents. I tend to believe that policy documents (general language policies and curricula) are only one of the components that determine the direction and outcome of language teaching.

2.2. Recent Work on Language Planning Policy

Until the 1960s the study of foreign languages in schools was limited to the academic track (lower and upper secondary schools). During the nineteenth century, when Finland was part of the Russian empire as a largely autonomous grand duchy, pupils in the lower secondary schools studied as obligatory subjects the other official language of the country (Swedish for Finnish-speaking pupils), Russian, and German, as well as Latin if they went to a classical school. After Finland gained its

Table 1. Lesson provision for language study in the secondary school, 1941.

	1	2	3	4	5	I	II	III	Total
Mother tongue	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	27
Other national lang.	4	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	21
1st foreign lang.	-	5	5	4	3	4	4	4	29
Latin / 2nd foreign lang.	-	-	-	-	-	5	6	4	15*
3rd foreign lang.						3	2	3	8
Total / all subjects	32	32	35	36	36	35	35	35	

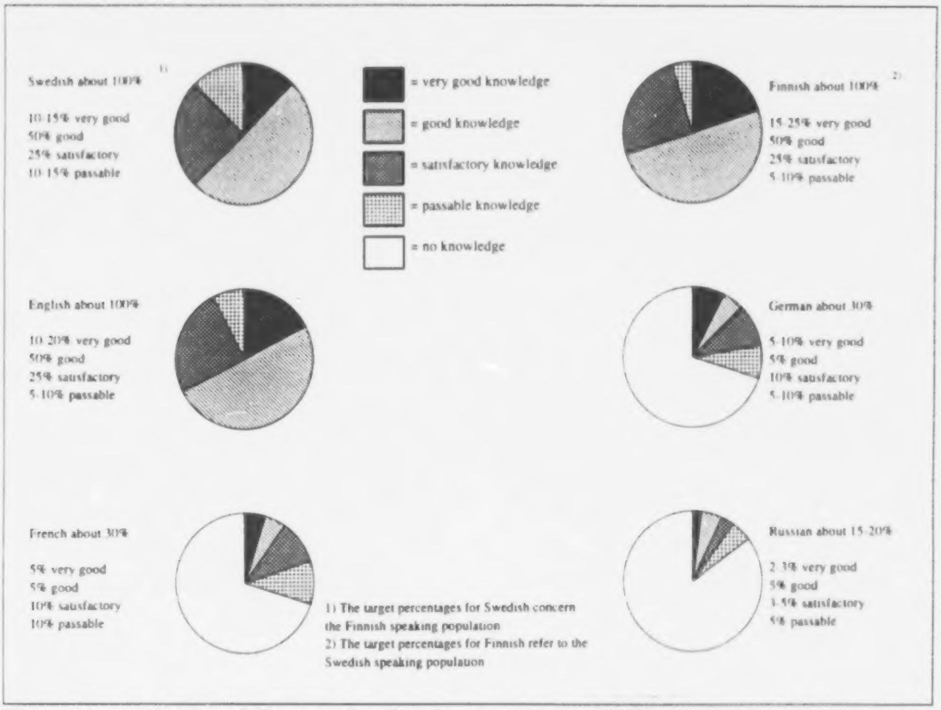
*Latin/2nd foreign language were obligatory in the language line only. In girls's school the programme of the language line was essentially applied with the exception that a second foreign language was obligatory from grade 4 onwards (19 weekly hours at the end of the upper secondary school)

independence in 1917, Russian ceased to be a compulsory subject.

The curriculum of 1941 for boys' and coeducational schools, which was essentially in force almost thirty years, had a language program that is described in table 1. German was by far the most common first foreign language in Finnish schools, and since the schools were and still are typically very small, they could not offer any choice: the choice of the school meant an automatic "choice" of one's first foreign language. In towns, schools might offer a choice, but headmasters often felt compelled to decide who should study what language if the pupils' choices would not create the desired classes. English surpassed German as the first foreign language only at the end of the 1950s.

When committee planning for the comprehensive schools started, the role of languages became a difficult issue. Many—probably especially those who represented the traditions of the elementary/primary school—were in favor of making only one foreign language compulsory. English was preferred as the first foreign language in the Finnish-speaking regions, and Swedish might be offered as a choice in bilingual regions. Big cities might offer German, French, or Russian in addition to English.

In subsequent political decision making, Swedish was made an obligatory subject for all Finnish-speaking pupils, as was Finnish for Swedish-speaking pupils. It was left to municipal decision making to determine whether English or Swedish was to be the first foreign language starting in grade 3. With the approval of the cabinet, bigger municipalities could also offer French, German, or Russian as a choice for the first foreign language. Thirty-two pupils were required for setting up such a language group. By 1977 only twenty out of close to five hundred municipalities had implemented this diversification choice in practice. The required quota of pupils was reduced to twenty in 1973 and to twelve in 1984.



1) The target percentages for Swedish concern the Finnish speaking population
2) The target percentages for Finnish refer to the Swedish speaking population

Figure 1. **National Targets for Foreign Language Skills.**

In the mid-1960s foreign language study became a part of all pupils' study program, and the starting age shifted two years earlier. The 1970s consolidated this development. In the new comprehensive schools, all pupils studied two foreign languages, and a third (the C-language) was an option in grades 8–9, taken by about one-third of all pupils. The 1980s saw an expansion of foreign language study in vocational upper secondary schools such that every student studied two languages for a varying amount of time. A course-based system was introduced in the academic upper secondary schools, and the formerly compulsory C- or D-language was made optional for those students who took a long course in mathematics.

Piecemeal changes did not lead to any real diversification of the first language. Accordingly, the cabinet set up a committee at the end of 1976, which submitted its report in 1979 (Committee Report 1979:60). The committee made a thorough statistical survey of trends in the teaching of foreign languages. In order to assess the needs for different languages, the committee reviewed all the needs-assessment studies that had been carried out in Finland as well as major studies conducted in several other countries. It also reviewed the use of different languages in international organizations and Finland's economic and cultural ties with other countries. On the basis of these surveys and taking into account the overall educational and cultural policy of the nation, the committee drew up a proposal for a long-term language teaching policy in Finland and defined the criteria that any such policy ought to meet.

At the macro level, the committee recommended that the provision of a choice of language should depend on the size of the municipality: municipalities with a population of one hundred thousand or more should offer five A-languages, those with fifty thousand should offer four, and those with twenty thousand should offer three. English and Swedish should always be offered. Children and their parents should have the right to choose which A-language the child should take, and the choice should be respected if a group of twenty could be formed. The committee recommended further that regional plans should be made to enhance coordination. These macro-level proposals were implemented as statutory (Act 479/83 and Statute 722/84).

The committee recommended that all Finnish citizens, irrespective of their mother tongue, should in the future have some knowledge of the other national language and one foreign language. Those who had chosen a language other than English as their first foreign language should have some knowledge of English also. Thus, English would be studied by all students. The committee suggested that about 30 percent of the population should also have a knowledge of German, and the same proportion should know Russian. French ought to be known by about 15–20 percent of the population. The number of languages would vary as well as the level of knowledge (see figure 1). On the average, each person would know 2.5 languages (everybody would have studied at least two languages, but some students would have studied up to four).

The committee stated that its quantitative and qualitative targets could best be achieved by increasing the number of pupils who study languages other than English as their first foreign language. Of the Finnish-speaking students, 70 percent would read English as their first language, 15 percent Swedish, 5–7 percent German, 5–7 percent Russian, and 2–3 percent French. This meant that from an average age group of 60,000 students, about 42,000 would read English and 18,000 would read some other language (instead of some 55,800 and 4,200, respectively, at the present time). In order to achieve such a better balance, the committee proposed that the number of languages offered as the first language ought to be geared to the size of the community.

The committee also proposed quantitative and qualitative national targets for foreign language skills in the entire population. According to these targets, all Finnish adults would have some knowledge of at least two foreign languages (see figure 1).

The cabinet also decided (on December 19, 1984) on targets for a five-year general plan for language teaching, whose implementation M.-L. Nikki (1992a) has studied in her doctoral dissertation. It should be noted that the plan was not binding.

All this planning led to political decisions that imposed on municipalities and provinces the obligation to plan the local/regional language provision in accordance

Table 2. **Estimates on how often the respondents needed the following languages in their work during the previous year (percentages of all respondents; Industry n=3094, Trade n=1807).**

	Not needed at all		a couple of times a year		monthly		weekly	
	I	T	I	T	I	T	I	T
Swedish	33	48	36	28	14	10	17	14
English	24	39	32	26	15	10	29	25
German	55	73	26	12	10	6	9	9
French	93	97	6	2	1			1
Russian	93	98	6	1	1		1	1
Norwegian	92	96	5	2	2	1	1	1
Danish	94	97	4	2	1	1	1	
Spanish	98	99	2	1				
Portuguese	100	100						
Other	98	99	1	1		1		

Table 3. **Estimated need of foreign language at work during the previous year if the persons in question had had some knowledge of the languages (percentages of all respondents) I=industry, T= trade.**

	couple of a times a year		about once a month		more often than once a month	
	I	T	I	T	I	T
Swedish	4	13	2	2	1	2
English	4	11	2	2	1	2
German	9	16	3	3	3	3
French	8	9	3	1	1	1
Russian	8	10	2	2	1	1
Norwegian	3	4	1	1	1	1
Danish	3	4	1	1	1	
Spanish	3	4	1	1		
Portuguese	1	2				
Other	4	3	1	1		1

with certain minimum requirements and gave pupils (and their parents) the right to exercise choice concerning the A- and C-language within the available provision. Swedish was the only obligatory language "specified by naming," and it became the B-language for the vast majority of pupils.

The Committee on European Languages and Cultures (Committee Report 1991:6) wanted to improve the position of Spanish and Italian, since they could be studied only as beginning D-languages in the upper secondary school, and in only some schools. The committee wanted to add Spanish to the list of A- and C-languages and to make Italian an elective C-language. The committee recommended that the optional E-language should be made available throughout the whole country, since it seemed to contribute to real language diversification.

Subsequently, a new statute (June 14, 1991) has given the upper secondary schools the right to determine freely which three foreign languages to offer. The third language continues to be optional to students taking the extensive course in mathematics. In the same statute, the possibility to arrange teaching in optional English ("E-English") was extended from the experimental schools to the whole educational system.

Language policy planning and decisions made in the recent past have meant that all pupils study foreign languages in the comprehensive schools, in the upper secondary schools, to a varying extent in the vocational schools, and in the universities. Foreign languages are also popular subjects in adult education, and they figure prominently in workplace education.

3. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS RELATED TO LANGUAGE TEACHING POLICY

3.1. Large-Scale Needs Studies

In the mid-1980s representatives of business and industry and of the language teaching field held discussions and agreed that we in Finland lack up-to-date information about what languages Finns actually need in economic life. I was asked to prepare a proposal for a large-scale project on needs assessment. Altogether, eight projects were envisaged, and half of them were implemented with the rather small funds that were obtained from various sources. Foreign language needs were studied in industry, commerce, state administration, and municipal administration in both cities and rural communities.

The findings are presented here in a general way, comparing the use of different languages, the potential need for different languages, and the language proficiency level of the testees. It is impracticable to describe the findings here in detail, language by language (for a detailed description, see Mehtäläinen 1987a, 1987b, 1989; Mehtäläinen & Takala 1990).

Table 2 describes the language needs of persons working in trade and industry. The figures include those language users who estimated their own language proficiency at close to zero but who have been forced to manage somehow in different language-use situations. The figures show clearly that three languages are commonly needed in Finnish industry: English, Swedish, and German. Thus, it is not the case, as has often been claimed in the public debate in the press, that the need for Swedish is negligible.

Those who need English at least a couple of times a year constituted 76 percent of the respondents in industry and 61 percent in trade; the figures for Swedish were 67 percent for industry and 52 percent for trade, and for German, 45 percent for industry and 27 percent for trade. It is obvious that these languages are also needed more often than the other languages. There were respondents who needed Portuguese in their work, but the percentage was so low that it disappeared when rounding off the figures. The most frequently mentioned language in the group "Other, what" was Italian.

The question of *potential* need for foreign languages was taken up by asking, "If you had needed in your work during the previous year a language that you don't know, which language/languages would you have needed and how often would you have needed it/them?" This implies that there would have been language-use situations if the person had had some knowledge of that language.

Table 3 draws attention to the latent need for German, French, and Russian in particular, and in trade also for Swedish (17 percent) and English (15 percent). As many as 15–22 percent of the respondents would have needed German at least a couple of times a year if they had had any knowledge of that language. The corresponding figures are 11–12 percent for French and 11–13 percent for Russian. It must be remembered, though, that the language need was primarily stated in terms of the category "a couple of times a year."

The respondents were also asked to estimate the adequacy of their language proficiency in relation to their job. As table 4 shows, most people felt that their language skills ought to be better. In the most commonly used languages, two-thirds of those who used the particular language in their work felt that their proficiency was inadequate. The proportion of those who felt that their oral proficiency was inadequate is higher than the proportion of those who felt that their written proficiency was inadequate. The starting level of language proficiency is one level lower than the average for those who felt that their proficiency is inadequate, and their required proficiency level is one level higher than the average. The required proficiency level corresponds to "being able to manage ordinary phone calls without any trouble and make oneself somehow understood in negotiations and in social receptions," as well as "having no difficulties in reading professional texts in one's

Table 4. **Adequacy of current language skills in industry (percents of all respondents).**

	English	Swedish	German	French	Russian
Sufficient oral skills	26	29	18	25	8
Sufficient written skills	26	30	21	28	5

own field and being able to write simple reports, memoranda, and business letters—however, with occasional mistakes—and being able to translate from a foreign language to Finnish fairly easily."

All in all, the *need for language proficiency in industry* is quite large as regards the languages needed and the language-use situations. The existing proficiency level can also be considered adequate in relation to tasks at work for those employees who use foreign languages almost daily. For those who need languages more rarely, the situation is a little different.

On the whole, the *need for language skills among persons employed in trade*, especially in wholesale trade, is fairly extensive as regards the languages needed and the language-use situations. There are nonetheless some who clearly do not work to their full capacity in relation to their language skills. Without use, language skills become rusty. Language proficiency is adequate when related to duties at work for persons who use foreign languages almost as a daily routine.

In trade, the present language skills and language range are sufficient. Colleagues can be used as interpreters, and various languages can to some extent substitute for others. Department store personnel, however, require an improvement in their general skills in English, Swedish, and German in order to raise the level of service. Close contacts with foreign principals and suppliers are typical of wholesale trade. In order to get things running smoothly and with few mistakes, it is necessary to raise the general level of English, Swedish, and German for the company's internal functions as well as to widen the language range for the company's external operations. The languages that would primarily be needed are German, French, and Italian.

3.2. Pupils', Parents', and Educational Administrators' Views of Language Teaching Policy

Nikki (1989, 1992a, 1989b), who is by profession an educational administrator, has conducted for her licentiate and Ph.D. theses a survey of pupils', parents', and educational administrators' views of the language teaching program in Finland. When asked about the number of obligatory languages in the comprehensive schools, the

Table 5. How many compulsory foreign languages should there be in the comprehensive school?

Respondent	Present system	Two, with choice	One
Comprehensive school	20%	40%	40%
Upper Secondary School	15%	50%	35%
Parents	9%	75%	16%
Educational administrators	11%	44%	45%

respondents clearly ranked the present system as the least popular choice (see table 5). Interestingly enough, the educational administrators were, relatively speaking, the most frequently in favor of the minimal compulsory language program.

As far as Swedish is concerned, the great majority of the respondents preferred to have it as an optional or elective subject: comprehensive school pupils 77 percent, upper secondary school pupils 81 percent, parents 87 percent, and educational administrators 86 percent.

A minority of the respondents felt that E-English (optional from grade 5 for those whose A-language is other than English) should retain its present position: comprehensive school pupils 33 percent, upper secondary school pupils 33 percent, parents 22 percent, and educational administrators 42 percent. The rest would prefer to have the choice of E-English for all pupils.

Table 6 shows clearly that the upper secondary school pupils were by far the most frequently in favor of a minimal language program in that type of school. As many as a third of the boys (33 percent) were of that opinion. Swedish should be optional or elective in the opinion of the majority in all three respondent groups (83 percent, 82 percent, and 76 percent, respectively).

Of comprehensive school pupils, 74 percent would make the same choice of elective subjects, 8 percent would now drop a foreign language, 10 percent would choose another language, and 8 percent would now choose a foreign language. Of all comprehensive school pupils, 35 percent would not elect a foreign language under any conditions.

Of all upper secondary school pupils, about 41 percent had not had a C-language as an elective subject. However, of the roughly 58 percent having a C-language background in the comprehensive school, only 73 percent continued to study it. Thus, one-quarter (27 percent) of pupils dropped their C-language in the upper secondary school. German dominated as the C-language: German 76 percent, French 14 percent, Russian 7 percent, and English 3 percent. Of all upper secondary school pupils, only 41 percent studied a C-language (12.7 percent of all boys).

Table 6. **How many compulsory foreign languages should there be in the upper secondary schools?**

Respondent	Present system	Two, with choice	One
Upper secondary school pupils	11%	62%	27%
Parents	10%	84%	6%
Educational administrators	23%	73%	4%

Of all upper secondary school pupils, 33 percent chose to start a D-language (10.6 percent of all boys). German dominated also as D-language: German 68 percent, French 22 percent, and Russian 10 percent. One-third of all upper secondary school pupils (54.5 percent of all boys) would not choose a D-language under any conditions.

At the beginning of the 1980s a decision was taken that those pupils who took the extensive course in mathematics would not have to take a C- or D-language. This decision, to allow students to have some choice, has had dramatic consequences for language study. Before the new system was introduced, all pupils studied a C-language and one-quarter also a D-language. In ten years the proportion of C- and D-readers combined has dropped to 81 percent (a considerable drop from 100 percent plus 25 percent); the figure drops further to 55 percent in the final grade. The same trend is seen in the matriculation examination: a test in a C- or D-language was taken by 76.6 percent of all examinees in 1978, but by only 38.9 percent in 1989.

On reviewing these figures, the Commission on European Cultures and Languages concluded that an undesired development had taken place, and recommended that the linkage between mathematics and C/D-language should be dropped and that either a C- or a D-language should be compulsory for all upper secondary school pupils.

Given the choice, about 40 percent of the readers of extended mathematics, who constitute 43–47 percent of all first-formers in the upper secondary schools, have left the C- and D-language out of their program. About 23–25 percent of them switch to the easier course after the first year. The study by Nikki confirmed the general view that boys in particular had chosen the extensive course in mathematics in order to avoid having to take a C- or D-language and then made a tactical switch.

Nikki (1992b) strongly supports the current demand for choice and options in the curriculum. She states that

> it would be most important that a balance could be found so that the needs of both society and students would be considered. From the implementation of the national plan or foreign language teaching, which was based on the needs of society, it can be learned that revising the policy and reforming the setting of its realization so that it better corresponds to the needs and the views of the target groups and micro-implementors would result in more successful implementation of a similar kind of policy. In this study students, parents, and educational administration authorities have expressed their opinions about the kind of alterations and revisions which should be made in the policy and the setting of language programs. The objective should be to draw up a policy which corresponds to the demands set by society but which, as much as possible, corresponds to students' and parents' needs. That kind of policy is inevitably a compromise. (p. 44)

Equally inevitably, there are bound to be widely divergent views on language teaching policy. I find myself disagreeing with Nikki on many points. Taking into account the discrepancy between needs assessments and the figures reported in Nikki's dissertation, I cannot agree with her advocacy of wide choice for communities, schools, parents, and pupils. The fact that a third of boys in the academic upper secondary schools would settle for one second/foreign language serves as a warning of the undesirable side effects of a "free-market" approach to language education. Neither do I share her strong faith in the motivating effect of choice. Motivation cannot be regarded only as an independent variable that accounts for learning; it can equally well be considered one of the major effects of teaching and learning.

As I have stated elsewhere, I am far from convinced that children and youth are interested in obtaining a truly many-sided education. When "good" and fairly long education has ceased to be a privilege that automatically leads to a good career, and has instead become a minimum requirement for even the more modest jobs, motivation cannot be expected to be high. Education is often a "must" that students may prefer to handle with the least amount of effort that produces acceptable results. I am particularly afraid that if pupils were given a wide choice, their home background would start exercising an even more powerful impact on their educational career than at present. Pupils with a supportive home atmosphere would be likely to acquire a better and more ambitious education, whereas those from less supportive homes would settle for a minimum program. We know from experience in our own comprehensive schools, which used to have a choice of tracks in foreign languages and mathematics, that home background has this influence over and above ability and school success.

Personally, I would be in favor of a relatively broad common program for all pupils. Choice would be limited largely to whether the pupils pursued certain subjects beyond the broad, common, basic program. For cultural and other reasons, I also believe that Swedish cannot be fully equated with other languages that are "foreign" to the Finnish-speaking population. This concept—even if in a more "diluted" form—is recommended by the working party that has recently proposed a framework for lesson allocation. It proposes that all upper-division schools (grades 7–9) would always offer Swedish as an option. Swedish would not, however, be obligatory for pupils.

Another reason why I am critical of making language study substantially dependent on the individual choices of pupils is that pupils have a limited ability to anticipate either their own language needs or those of the labor market. They are likely to be largely influenced by pop culture and by peers. It would also be simpler and cheaper to organize a broad common provision than one with wide options.

A further reason for caution in extending choice in language study has to do with cultural policy. As several committees have pointed out but generally ignored, language policies have not only pragmatic consequences but also important cultural influences. This is something that pragmatists, who advocate a minimalist program, seldom or never consider.

4. MEASURES NEEDED TO ENSURE DIVERSIFICATION OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

If we wish to influence what actually happens in language teaching and study at the system level, we need to have a clear idea of what affects choices if choice is allowed. We can always try to make the study of languages in general or of specific languages rewarding and motivating. This is not easy, and if all optional subjects succeed equally well in becoming attractive, pupils face a difficult choice. Personal motivation and relevance cannot be the major basis for language study in a country like Finland, where high and broad language proficiency is vital.

As statistics have shown (Committee Report 1991:6), language study has declined in the upper secondary schools. It seems to me ill advised that the task force for lesson allotment continues to support the two-language policy, especially since even the European Community is expressing clear support for increasing language study. A recent memorandum states, "It would appear reasonable that all Community citizens should have the opportunity to acquire communicative competence in at least one Community language in addition to their mother-tongue and that substantial portions of the population should be expected to acquire a knowledge of two Community foreign languages" (COM [91] 349 Final). This statement applies to countries many of which are officially monolingual and two of which already have a "world language" as their national language.

I believe that choice in education can be guided, just as desired developments in society and business are supported, by various incentives (tax cuts, cheaper loans, fund allocations for prioritized areas). *The best, and only trustworthy, guarantee that language learning opportunities will be utilized is to make language study compulsory.* If that is an option that is not appealing—and admittedly, allowing choice sounds better, for a number of reasons—then the extent of foreign language study can still be influenced at the system level by giving concrete rewards for every foreign language a person has studied. Within the educational system this reward can take the form of extra-credit points given systematically and automatically, independent of the study line concerned. Secondary-level educational institutions could give extra points for every language studied in the comprehensive school. I have long felt that Finnish universities in particular have failed in this respect. Another failing is the fact that university departments increasingly neglect to give alternatives for set books in several languages. Thus, universities indirectly guide students in the English-only direction. The universities could also send a message to school pupils by charging for the beginning language courses that they need to arrange for those who have been "minimalists" in the schools.

The level of language proficiency is partly determined by *examinations and their credibility*. External examinations signal to test takers what, in fact, is required of them. Finland offers an example of a statutory language examination that is almost totally lacking in credibility. Most Finnish-speaking civil servants, including university teachers, are required to demonstrate certain job-related skills in Swedish. It is a well-kept secret that it is possible to obtain a certificate from carefully chosen examiners without having more than a smattering of Swedish. Tens of thousands of Finns have a certificate of Swedish but would be unable to manage in Swedish in a professional context. One concrete way in which we could improve the knowledge of Swedish in Finland would be to make the test a credible one.

The language testing team at the University of Jyväskylä has actively contributed to the development of a credible language testing system for the workplace. The system, roughly comparable to the English Speaking Union scales 5–8, currently operates in English, German, and Swedish. Development work for levels 1–4 has progressed so far that pilot test construction has started.

Language study in and outside of school can also be encouraged by *salary incentives.* Employers, especially in the public sector, could do quite a lot in this respect. If Finland joins the European Economic Community, foreign language proficiency will need to be upgraded—not so much in business and industry, which have taken steps in this respect, as in central administration. It would, in fact, be interesting to study educational administrators' perceptions in ten years' time, when the Finnish educational system is likely to have lost some of its present insularity.

Another neglected opportunity concerns the *bilingual nature of Finland.* There is practically no exchange of pupils and teachers. Exchange students tend to travel to the United States at great cost. Local conditions—and the nearby Scandinavian setting—are not utilized to improve the current situation in the teaching of Swedish. The opportunity for educating Finnish youth for the multilingual world via education for a bilingual society is not used, as suggested by the latest language planning committee.

Language learning services need to be available from childhood to retirement. The study of foreign languages is popular in adult education. However, such study is not very goal-oriented. Also, adult education as a "second chance" tends to attract the ones who have better basic education. This is another example of the "Matthew effect": "Unto every one that hath shall be given" (25:29). The better and broader the language proficiency one obtains at school age, the better one's chances for building up further competence in those languages and starting a new language.

An interesting contribution to the language teaching policy discussion was made by a national working party, which was set up to make a proposal for the reorganization of the high-stakes matriculation examination (Ministry of Education, Committee Report 1993:25). It proposed that students would be allowed to choose to take four out of five subjects: the mother tongue, the other national language, a foreign language, mathematics, and general knowledge (including several subjects: history, geography, psychology, religious knowledge, philosophy, chemistry, physics). Tests at two levels (basic and advanced) would be available in the second/foreign languages and in mathematics. The candidate would have to take an advanced test in at least one of the three subjects. The working party recommends that the teaching and testing of oral proficiency should be intensified in schools and that grading should be supported by centrally prepared test materials. At least in the beginning, the tests would be graded at schools and would be optional for students. An interesting twist, which is bound to keep discussion on language teaching policy alive in Finland, is that there would be no compulsory tests in the matriculation examination, including the mother tongue and the other national language.

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PROBLEMS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE POLICY IN FINLAND

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In a country like Finland, which is officially bilingual and whose languages (Finnish and Swedish) are little known and understood elsewhere, problems related to foreign language teaching and foreign language choices have a close relation both to national educational and cultural policy and to political and economic developments in the country. Foreign language skills are an essential part of occupational competence, and the study of foreign languages is required at all levels of the Finnish educational system. Therefore, Finland's national foreign language program is larger than that of most other small countries.

During the comprehensive school reform of the 1960s, the Finnish educational system became very centralized. All schools followed almost the same hourly allotment and the same national syllabus, and all textbooks had to be in harmony with the national syllabus. The late 1980s and early 1990s brought considerable changes, such as the delegation of decision making from the national level to local school authorities. Hitherto every change in the Finnish educational system was controlled and regulated by Parliament, by cabinet guidelines, and by directives from the Ministry of Education or the National Board of Education.

Before and immediately after World War II, German was practically the only foreign language taught in Finland. Swedish as the second domestic language was the other modern language generally taught in Finnish secondary schools (the Swedish-speaking minority now comprises about 5.6 percent of the total population). In the 1960s, after a long political debate on the principles of comprehensive school reform, the decision was made that the comprehensive schools should include two compulsory modern languages, one of which would be the non-native national language—Swedish for Finnish-speaking pupils and Finnish for Swedish-speaking pupils. The language debate repeated itself several times in the 1970s and 1980s, and as late as 1991 the Finnish Parliament voted for Swedish as a compulsory subject in the comprehensive schools.

The repeated debates on the crucial role of Swedish in the national foreign language program—vocational education and institutions of higher education included—and statistical information gathered annually by school authorities about student language choices in all schools (table 1) resulted, in March 1992, in a new proposal by the Hourly Allotment Working Group of the Ministry of Education. The working group (Ministry of Education 1992a) suggested that there should be two compulsory

Table 1. **Percentages of pupils who studied different languages as the first language.**

The Commission 1992.

ENGLISH	SWEDISH	GERMAN	FRENCH	RUSSIAN
a) comprehensive school				
87.4%	3.9%	3.1%	0.9%	0.2%
(57,267)	(2,557)	(2,003)	(606)	(143)
b) upper secondary school				
91.4%	6.7%	1.0%	0.6%	0.4%
(30,487)	(2,190)	(329)	(184)	(136)

languages in the comprehensive schools, and that one of them should be English rather than the non-native national language. Referring to the prospect of European integration, the working group stated that there was a need to take measures to include such European languages as German, French, and Spanish. After much negotiation at the ministerial level, a decision in principle was made in March 1993. Swedish remains a compulsory subject in the comprehensive schools, but with an allotment of only six weekly hours instead of the former nine hours.

The repeated debates on the Finnish foreign language teaching plan concern problems that were presented, after thorough study, as early as 1979 in the report of the Committee on Language Teaching Policy in Finland, and again as late as March 1992 in the report of the Commission for the Development of Language Teaching. The present Finnish foreign language program for comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools, and vocational and adult education is based on the 1979 proposals (table 2 and figure 1).

The 1979 report stated that the compulsory second national language guarantees Finland's historical cultural ties with Scandinavia and emphasizes Nordic cooperation, which has been politically very important for Finland during the postwar period. Surveys conducted in 1986–89 by the University of Jyväskylä on language needs (Mehtäläinen & Takala 1990:6-7)—generally, the needs of commerce and industry—indicate that trade and industry in Finland need English and Swedish the most, followed by German, French, Russian, and Spanish (table 3). English pop culture and American influences have had such an impact on Finnish students'

Table 2. **Target figures for comprehensive school (The Language Committee 1979).**

Finnish Speaking population/First foreign language

ENGLISH	SWEDISH	GERMAN	FRENCH	RUSSIAN
70%	15%	5-7%	2-3%	5-7%

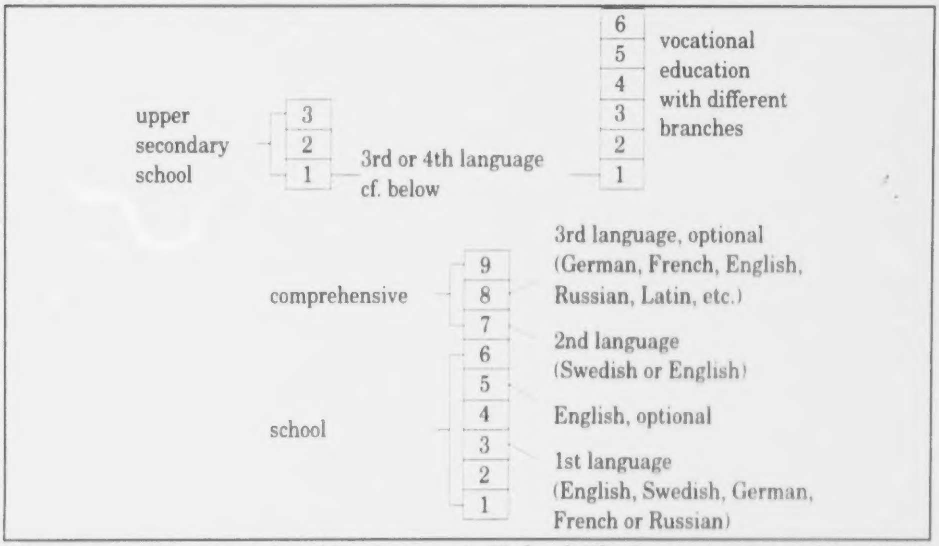
upper
secondary
school
3
2
1
3rd or 4th language
cf. below
6
5
4
3
2
1
vocational
education
with different
branches
comprehensive
school
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
3rd language, optional
(German, French, English,
Russian, Latin, etc.)
2nd language
(Swedish or English)
English, optional
1st language
(English, Swedish, German,
French or Russian)

Figure 1. **Present national FL program in Finland (The Language Committee 1979).**

foreign language choices that English practically dominates as the first foreign language in the Finnish educational system (table 1). The enormous changes in the political climate in Europe and throughout the world have increased Finnish interest in other world languages, especially German, French, and Spanish. But even though the present foreign language program permits the study of German, French, and Russian at the age of nine (the third grade), and even though the directives of the Finnish Ministry of Education try to guide pupil choice and offer, in the fifth grade, the chance for extra voluntary study in English to pupils who have chosen a language other than English as their first foreign language, foreign language choice in Finland remains very one-sided.

People who are opposed to having Swedish as a compulsory language insist on the opportunity to choose a world language other than Swedish, which cannot be used outside of the Nordic region (about twenty-three million inhabitants). The Russian language has been problematic for the Finns, and interest in Russian has always been minimal (under 1 percent). During the language debate in 1991, regional school authorities in eastern Finland proposed an interesting pilot experiment offering studies in Russian instead of Swedish, in view of the tourist and business contacts developing across the eastern border. However, Russian enrollments in Finland declined strongly during the 1992–93 school year, especially in the upper secondary schools.

The centralized implementation of the Finnish foreign language plan on the basis of the 1979 committee's recommendations was still endangered by the lack of good and relevant textbooks and other teaching materials in German, French, and Russian for pupils in the third grade in comparison with the colorful textbooks available in

Table 3. **Survey by the University of Jyväskylä on language needs in Finland (industry and trade) 1986-89 (Mehtäläinen & Takala 1990).**

	INDUSTRY		TRADE
ENGLISH	76%		61%
SWEDISH	67%		52%
GERMAN	45%		27%
FRENCH	12%	potential	12%
RUSSIAN	11%	need	13%

English. Teachers of French, German, and Russian who have pupils in the third grade have not had access to adequate in-service training courses. Students, especially those in some vocational lines, have had difficulty continuing their studies of German, French, and Russian. In the present economic situation, these small groups of students suffer when budget cuts are made by local school authorities.

The 1992 report of the Commission for the Development of Language Teaching emphasized the possibility of starting foreign language teaching at an earlier stage, in kindergarten, and pointed out the enormous need for foreign language skills in Finland. In mapping the present situation in schools below the university level, the commission wants to increase the use of foreign languages in teaching non-language subjects, such as history, geography, literature, mathematics, and the sciences, and proposes that Finnish foreign language teachers should specialize in other subjects too. A reform in the subject combinations of foreign language teachers is needed. Pupils should also have the right to drop a language after a given period and begin studies in a new language. The commission also put special emphasis on oral skills in foreign language learning and on the essential role of Swedish as a second national language and as a contact language with Scandinavia.

Foreign language experts and teachers criticize strongly the decision that was made recently. Local authorities are expected to offer courses in three foreign languages (two of them being compulsory) in their comprehensive schools. This will result in great differences locally, particularly between comprehensive schools since there is no school-leaving examination. The syllabus reform which is due in 1994 will work in the same direction. The objective of educational equality can only be reached at the end of the upper secondary school through the matriculation examination. Foreign language experts also say that the recent decision may also risk the articulation of the courses.

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LANGUAGES AND POLICY IN ESTONIA

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Estonia's recently gained independence and its acknowledgment by the majority of European and world states have made the problems of foreign language learning and teaching a very special political and educational issue. People are concerned whether Estonian society and its educational system will be able to cope with the increasing need for foreign language competence after years of a social and educational policy that deliberately offered very little chance for establishing and developing international contacts or for acquiring adequate knowledge and skills for communication.

The present boom in the establishment of contacts in various spheres of human activity clearly shows not only our insufficient foreign language competence but also our lack of information in different fields of economy and technology. This has created dissatisfaction and has evoked heavy criticism of the educational system, particularly of foreign language learning in the general comprehensive schools. It has led to political decisions that we hope to put into practice as soon as possible.

Language policy as an expression of state policy can be traced in various fields of social life. One of the most important legal documents was the 1989 act on state language. According to this act, the official language of the Republic of Estonia is Estonian, and that language must be used all over the country. The educational policy of the state usually specifies (1) the languages in which is it possible to acquire education (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, vocational, and higher education); and (2) the value of foreign language competence in society and how foreign language learning is organized in different educational institutions.

The most important factor for the survival of a nation and its cultural heritage is the opportunity for all its people to receive an education in the native language, from preschool to the university level. Several examples can be found in the recent history of Soviet republics showing a clear preference for education acquired in Russian. Accordingly, parents sent their children to Russian schools and so paved the way for their future career. All the schools in the three Baltic republics, however, managed to preserve their priority over Russian schools for various reasons, first of all the required standard of achievement. And fortunately, educational changes need time everywhere.

Considering the geopolitical position of Estonia and its demographic situation, there must be careful planning as to the optimal proportions for foreign language learning and the corresponding organizational structures in various state and private educational institutions.

Everybody understands the importance and value of foreign language competence under these new conditions of opening up to contacts with the rest of world, but no language competence for any number of people can be acquired overnight.

In order to ascertain how we can effectively offer the opportunity to acquire foreign languages in the general comprehensive schools and other educational institutions according to the needs of different learners, we have attempted to study the situation with the help of sociological research. The next step will be to set those demands as aims or goals of studies in different language-learning programs for various school types or study groups. The third step will be to find a suitable content for language learning and to present it in a language textbook. The required content should be defined with consideration for the *functional* side of the language; every student learns a foreign language with the aim of using it for his own purposes, in certain spheres of social life.

General objectives for learning must be carefully selected and defined at the level of the individual learner, study group, and school type.

The program of activities for foreign language development in Estonia was compiled in January 1992. It was based not only on political decisions but also on research carried out during the last decade, which offers concrete data to be considered. The following research was available for use in making decisions for the present:

- In 1984 the first pilot research on the practical use of different foreign languages was carried out. The research described the variety of learners' motivations for studying languages.

- In 1985 the relation between language subjects and other subjects at the level of the general comprehensive schools was studied, with the aim of ascertaining the context of culture for teaching foreign language.

- In 1986 an expert evaluation (according to eleven criteria) was made of the content of all textbooks for learning German and some of the English language textbooks.

- In 1987–88 a study of the needs for foreign language competence according to six principal functional styles (from everyday speech to scientific style) was carried out on different social groups of learners as well as on the demographic model of the Estonian-speaking population. The study signaled a lack of foreign language competence in certain areas, yet at the same time it showed that the motivation for foreign language study was quite high even under these conditions.

- In 1988 a statistical content analysis was carried out on the above-mentioned functional styles of all three foreign language textbook series (for learning English, German, and Russian) used in Estonian general comprehensive schools. The analysis showed inadequacies, noncorrespondence, and other differences concerning the social needs of foreign language competence, the aims of learning, and content presented in the textbooks.

In 1989, as a result of the above-mentioned research and a linguo-didactically oriented school observation carried out in 1987–89, a new conception of foreign language learning was compiled. The following changes were proposed:

- In general, children at comprehensive schools must acquire sufficient command of Estonian before they start with Russian as the first foreign language. The start with Russian was shifted from form 1 to form 3; the number of lessons per week was three or four.

- The second foreign language—English or German—would start in form 6, with four or five lessons per week. The higher frequency of lessons would enable the learner to make quicker progress and to develop motivation. The general aim was set: to acquire foreign language competence, with stress on developing the learner's personality and foreign language learning strategies. Attention was called to aspects of collaboration between students and teachers. Some proposals were also made for the adoption of various principles from educational psychology and considerations concerning teaching methodology.

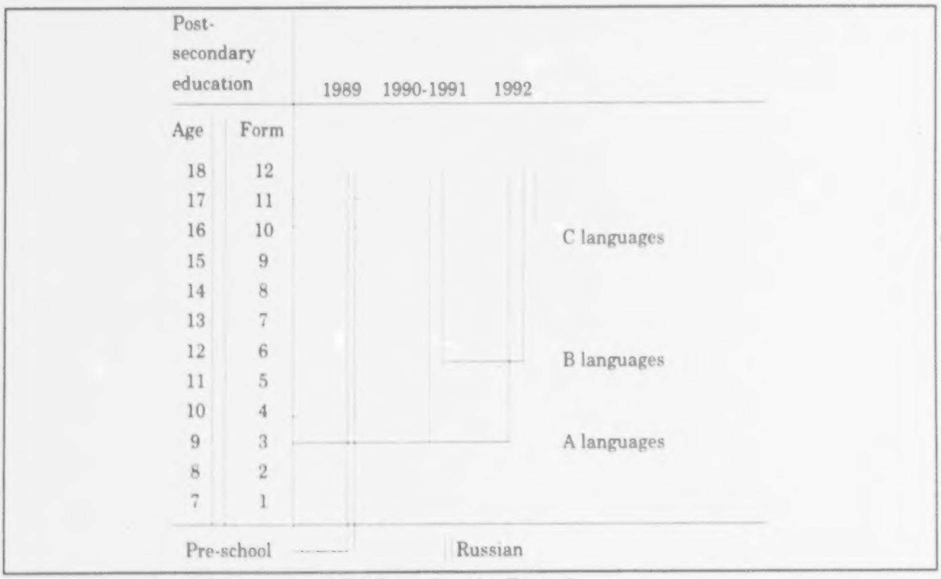

Figure 1. **Development of FL learning in Estonia.**

In January 1992 a new political decision was taken by the Ministry of Education according to which all languages other than the state language, Estonian, acquired the status of foreign languages. When foreign language learning starts in form 3, every student is free to choose for his first foreign language one of four—English, German, Russian, or French. In form 6 a second choice is offered among the same languages. If a student has started in form 3 with English, which is usually the case, in form 6 he has to choose among Russian, German, or French. French is, unfortunately, taught and learned by a very limited number of people at the moment, so the usual choice is German or Russian.

There are some noticeable trends in developments in foreign language learning: (1) almost everybody tries to learn English; (2) the second foreign language is usually German; and (3) Russian is becoming neglected, although the qualified teachers and study aids are all there. In a way, Russian has fallen into momentary disgrace, but it would be most shortsighted to deny the practical necessity of Russian for maintaining contacts, not only today but also in the future. Hopefully, people will find out soon what the correct choices for everybody will be.

Considering the last-mentioned document, the 1992 program of activities for foreign language developments, the goals set for the different levels of education have been designed in accordance with the six-level competence system acknowledged in all the member states of the European Community:

- By the end of the nine years of compulsory school, students are expected to achieve a C level (the EC third level) in two foreign languages.

- By the end of upper secondary school, students are expected to achieve a D (fourth) level in two foreign languages and a C level in a third foreign language.

- At universities, students are expected to achieve an E (fifth) level in two foreign language; the F (sixth) level is expected of specialists-philologists.

When discussing issues of language learning on the state level, the following should be considered:

- What is the real need (demand) for mastering different languages to different levels of competence within the country, considering the cultural and regional peculiarities of the area and the functional use of various foreign languages?

- When designing curricula for different educational institutions, what are the aims of foreign language learning, the time allotted for studies of the native language of the learner, and the traditions of foreign language learning and teaching in the particular country?

- When compiling textbooks and other study aids, is the chosen material linguistically authentic and meaningful, considering genuine communication and the functional-notional approach of the learner? Does it contribute to developing a tolerant attitude on the part of the learner toward the foreign and the learner's abilities to think critically?

- When planning economies for the implementation of a designed foreign language policy, what is the approximate number of learners? How much time has been allotted for acquiring the required competence? What teacher training is required? What are the costs of designing and producing curricula, textbooks, and the like?

All finances must be calculated on all levels, from schools to governmental offices, with some reserves set aside for unexpected developments.

Considering the present foreign language situation in Estonia—high motivation for learning, recent positive developments in putting together national action programs, and the friendly support of foreign colleagues—there really are some results to be expected in the near future. There will be more problems with learning Estonian as a state language than with learning other European languages. We must avoid discrimination against any language, especially considering recent developments in the learning of Russian. For the sake of their development, small nations definitely need a broader foreign language competence.

SECTION II

LANGUAGE CHOICE

HUMAN RIGHTS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Foreign language learning is a vital element in the contemporary Europe-building process. The languages that are ascribed such cross-national functions are generally promoted for instrumental reasons (trade, international contact) or for more abstract goals (international "understanding"), as well as for general educational ones. Although the *language learning agenda* is often relatively explicit, and visible in syllabuses and examinations, and the *cultural agenda* may have a high profile, and is no longer confined to the significance of "great" literary figures, the *foreign policy agenda* is seldom explicit. One might therefore usefully ask:

1. what the implications are for country X (Holland, Sweden, Switzerland, etc.) of making English the first foreign language and sometimes the sole obligatory foreign language, and whether policies in country Y (Finland, Germany, etc.) involving a more diversified approach to choice of first foreign language can have significantly different language policy outcomes

2. whether opting for English rather than German or Russian as the first foreign language in Eastern European countries has significant implications, and what the causal factors are in triggering such policy decisions, domestic concerns, regional policy, or external pressures (foreign governments, supranational organizations, Goethe Institut, British Council, private language schools, etc.)

3. whether the European Community policy of young people learning two foreign languages will achieve its various goals, some of which are macro-political (the French and the Germans wanting to counteract the dominance of English, the goal of forging links between Europeans from different states)

4. whether the main thrust of language learning should be concerned less with such "international" languages and more with domestic minority languages, both autochthonous and immigrant, now that there is increased recognition of the rights of speakers of minority languages to be educated through the medium of such languages (see e.g. the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and national legislation in favor of the same language in Norway and Finland)

This brief paper can only touch on these issues, on which there is a considerable amount of potentially relevant literature,[1] and will concentrate on some aspects of how linguistic hierarchies are created and consolidated nationally and internationally, and on the contribution of a human rights approach to language learning. The paper will serve rather to raise language policy questions than to provide answers.

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Language policy choices reflect the *structural and ideological power* associated with the relevant languages. When languages are learned as foreign and second languages in formal educational systems, it is because the languages in question are dominant languages somewhere. It is therefore important that the value judgments buttressing educational language planning be made explicit, and that the covert agenda behind the promotion of dominant international languages be made public. This is true in foreign language planning in all Western societies, where I assume that the dominant official or "national" language is not at risk—though this is debatable, as French concern about the encroachment of English demonstrates. It is also arguable that in states where there is an ambivalent attitude to the mother tongue and great receptivity to foreign languages (e.g. Denmark), policies may be pursued that weaken the dominant language. The need to make the covert or "international" agenda explicit and public is also great at present throughout Eastern Europe, which needs to be alert to whether external, transnational support for the learning of a given foreign language is "charity" from a donor country, opportunism, altruistic measures to ensure "international understanding," or a bridgehead for commercial, political, or cultural dominance.

An explicit language policy presupposes language planning that is sensitive to a range of social, political, economic, and ideological pressures, some of which are generated internally within a state and some externally. There are essentially three interrelated types of language planning: *corpus planning* (to do with language form and structure), *status planning* (to do with the uses to which a language is put in various domains, and the prestige attached to the relevant languages), and *acquisition planning* (the arrangements made, generally by a Ministry of Education, for the learning of languages). Key issues are, then, choice of official state languages, the status of "national" languages, which languages are to be used as the medium of instruction, and which, if any, foreign languages are to be obligatory.

The languages to be planned for and learned relate to an *ethnic, local* dimension, the maintenance of cultural traditions and authenticity, the continuity of languages from one generation to the next, and the use of "community" languages (in different states referred to as "heritage" languages or "autochthonous" languages). The child in school also needs to be equipped for *societal* language functions (to use the languages of the local media and state media, to be prepared for adult working life) and *state-regulated* functions (e.g. dealings with local authorities on matters of employment or taxation). Finally, educational language planning involves equipping the citizen for a range of *suprastatal* or *transnational* functions (learning foreign languages for purposes of contact with the outside world, these languages being connected with significant geopolitical interests).

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[1] Ammon 1991; Ammon et al. 1991; Calvet 1993; Coulmas 1991; Giordan 1992; Hagège 1992; Phillipson 1992b; Skutnabb-Kangas 1990; Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins 1988; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson forthcoming (which includes articles from all over the world on language rights); and *Contact Bulletin*, published by the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages. There is, of course, a substantial amount of relevant material produced in "local" languages—for instance, on language policy in Denmark in Danish.

Increasingly such languages, in particular English, are occupying important domains internally and may be more appropriately described as "second" than as "foreign" languages. In the Scandinavian countries, for instance, English is now so widely used in the media, commerce, and academia that it is no longer "foreign" in the traditional sense. The Danish minister of education in the rightist government of the 1980s is on record as describing English as the "second mother tongue" of the Danes. When success in learning the language in school is a precondition for upper secondary and higher education, it has a significant social stratificational function.

The number of languages to be learned in obligatory schooling depends on whether the child is from a minority or majority language group—it is estimated that of the 320 million citizens of European Community countries, the mother tongue of 50 million is not the dominant state language—and how far the state encourages multilingualism. In the case of the extreme monolingualism of Britain and the United States, English is insularly regarded as being universally appropriate. European Community ministers of education have agreed that one foreign language should be obligatory in their countries, and it was only resistance from Great Britain that blocked acceptance of a principle of two foreign languages (which in continental Europe is often the norm and ensures that one foreign language is studied in addition to English, a position that the other "big" languages wish to ensure). In an integrated Europe it is imperative that many children become high-level multilinguals. Many minority children are already multilingual, despite educational language policies that have often not been conducive to it.

A *human rights* approach in educational language planning involves the fostering of attitudes—at the local, national, and supranational levels—and the elaboration of a structure within which the individual does not suffer from oppression, specifically from linguistic oppression (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson forthcoming). Universal human rights represent a normative standard, an inherent right that the state cannot be justified in restricting. Even in Scandinavia, which prides itself on promoting the cause of human rights globally, linguistic minorities, indigenous and immigrant, are with few exceptions deprived of their linguistic human rights, of rights that the dominant group regard as natural for themselves—in particular, the right to learn one's mother tongue adequately to deal with the authorities in local administration, the legal system, the health system, and so on in the mother tongue. It is when languages are structurally favored in key domains of language use (official services, administration, justice) or domains of language learning (choice of a language as the medium of education, and whether the policy represents additive or subtractive language learning) that there may be evidence of linguistic injustice.

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In the contemporary world English is regarded as supremely eligible for many functions, but there was a time when the superiority of French was widely believed in, when the intrinsic qualities of the dominant language were supposed to justify its preeminence. When French was the lingua franca of European elites and functioned as the domestic language of the aristocracy in many parts of Europe, it was promoted as being a supremely pure, logical, and aesthetically pleasing language. In the eighteenth century Diderot, the main editor of the French *Encyclopédie*, declared that French was the appropriate language for scientific communications not just for instrumental reasons, but because the French language corresponded more closely to the natural order and expression of thoughts than did other languages. The Academy of Berlin held a competition in 1782 on the theme of why French was a "universal" language (at a time when less than half of the population of France spoke French). One of the two winning essays argued that languages that do not follow the syntax of French—subject, verb, and object, in that order—are illogical and inadequate. Not only was French more logical, but "ce qui n'est pas clair n'est pas français" (quoted in Calvet 1987, p. 74).

The French are still keen to promote their language internationally, and irrational attitudes to the assumed superiority of French are still in evidence today (in French government reports and in the attitudes of some learners of French in, e.g., Denmark). Contemporary promotion is more crudely geared to free-market economics: "là où on parle français, on achête français" (quoted in Coste 1984, p. 35). In like fashion, one of the maxims of American cultural imperialism has been that "trade follows the book" (Ninkovich 1982, p. 90). The British have regarded the promotion of English worldwide as a key dimension of foreign policy since the 1950s. As soon as the cold war ended, English was being promoted as a panacea for all the ills of Eastern Europe. In German foreign policy the learning of German as a foreign language in schools is regarded as a central indicator of cultural, economic, and political influence (Der Deutscher Bundestag 1985).

It is very likely that many of the arguments adduced in favor of English as a lingua franca in the contemporary world need to be deconstructed so as to demonstrate their falsity and to shed light on the hidden agenda of decisions on choice of language. Such decisions invariably involve the consolidation of a hierarchy of languages and serve the interests of certain languages and peoples better than others (see Phillipson 1992b, ch. 9). For instance, a common argument is that English can lead to "national unity" in multilingual countries, but there is counterevidence from Northern Ireland that sharing a language does not causally lead to amity, just as the fact that Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians are all speakers of Serbo-Croatian did not ensure understanding and peace. Clearly, in conflictual situations language can serve as a powerful mobilizing factor, just as ethnic identity and religion can, but the causes of such conflict are generally real or perceived injustice of some kind. Linguistic injustice generally accompanies other types of injustice—economic, political, and cultural. The alternative to this is the according of basic human rights, political, social, and linguistic, to all. It is significant that the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages stresses in its preamble that support for minority languages in no way implies a threat to the dominant languages. There are, fortunately, examples of ethnic cohabitation as a counterweight to ethnic conflict (itself a misleading label, as it seems to imply that ethnic groups are necessarily at odds with each other).

The current boom in the demand for English has been accompanied by inflated claims for what the *language* can do and for what the *language-teaching profession* can do. These have been analyzed in depth elsewhere (Phillipson 1992a, 1992b) in studies that link the micro level of pedagogical practices (e.g. a monolingual classroom, native speakers as representatives of a dominant culture) to macro-level structural factors (e.g. promotion of one language and culture involving the marginalization of others).

European language planning should be informed by lessons from the underdeveloped "third world," because here too the underlying political agenda of language learning has been relatively covert. The evidence is that the promotion of the former colonial language has done little for linguistic democracy and a great deal for elite formation and the servicing of links between periphery (third world) elites and center (Western) interests. The former colonial languages are used as the medium of education and government, and social structure directly reflects the linguistic hierarchy. Proficiency in English or French is a sine qua non for employment in the modern sector, and even for the exercise of democratic political and social rights. In such countries most languages have been underdeveloped, in the same ways as their economies have. Our languages and economies have been taken as the norm. Their languages have, under colonialism and the "aid" of the postcolonial age, largely been prevented from going through the authentic development process that many European languages went through as recently as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The interesting question, then, is whether "foreign" languages such as English in Europe may be acquiring a similar structural position globally. If so, whose interests are they serving, and what is the role of the language-teaching profession in their promotion?

For Europeans in states where the official language has restricted currency elsewhere (e.g. Holland, Sweden), the issue is whether a form of diglossia is emerging. There are clear patterns of diglossia in former colonies and in the states that were formerly under Soviet domination. In the Soviet Union, Russian started as a "foreign" language in Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, and so on but gradually evicted the dominant local language from a number of key domains, and was so structurally reinforced that the local language was marginalized. Are the languages of Eastern Europe now at risk in the free-market economy to the same extent as they were in the Soviet command economy? Are we witnessing the emergence of a global diglossia in which "international" languages are used for high-prestige purposes and the local language is being confined to the domestic, private sphere? Does the prominence of English and acceptance of diglossic functional differentiation within "independent" nation-states indicate that other languages are being correspondingly underdeveloped?

In parallel with "foreign" languages being increasingly visible in a whole range of domestic functions within the state, there is major investment in "foreign" language learning in schools. It is paradoxical that states such as France and Germany invest massively in the learning of English, a language that they feel their culture is threatened by. On the other hand, "foreign" languages can now be learned not merely for personal cultural enrichment but also so as to promote understanding of the societies the learners themselves come from and the supranational processes their countries are caught up in. Language awareness as a dimension of language learning should also be concerned with linguistic hierarchies and language rights. There is not only a "national" curriculum but also a domestic "international" curriculum.

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A number of professional associations of language teachers have been canvassing for the principle of foreign language learning to be accepted as a human right (most notably FIPLV, Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes; see the *FIPLV World News*). This reflects the laudable goal of wishing to encourage greater international understanding through foreign language learning. However, there is a fundamental difference between learning a language because this is necessary for the continuity and survival of a group (a cause to which UNESCO is committed), and language learning for additive enrichment, which the state wishes to capitalize on for instrumental reasons, meaning often in order to promote exports. Linguistic human rights and basic justice in the educational system are urgently needed by minority language groups, whereas those whose mother tongue is the dominant language have legitimate educational needs of another kind. Human rights are inalienable rights that no government can be justified in restricting, and this cannot be said to apply to foreign language learning.

There are currently a number of United Nations "universal" covenants being elaborated or implemented, among them the rights of the child, the rights of minorities, and the rights of indigenous peoples, all of which cover linguistic human rights. UNESCO is supporting efforts to formulate and promulgate a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Human Rights. There are limitations to all the existing declarations (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson forthcoming), quite apart from the frequent gap between their endorsement by the state and their implementation. There is a need to clarify in more detail which language rights are inalienable human rights that all educational systems should attempt to promote, and how states additionally can promote multilingualism in an increasingly interdependent world. If the principles elaborated in human rights covenants are put into practice, there should be less injustice and less conflict. Minorities would be granted more autonomy, and this could reduce the injustices inherent in linguistic hierarchies. The goal should be to permit minorities and majorities to be secure in their multiple linguistic identities so that they can contribute constructively to creating a more peaceful, equitable world.

How hierarchies of "international/foreign" languages fit into human rights principles is an issue that remains to be addressed.

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LANGUAGE CHOICE AND ITS IMPACT: THE SOCIOCULTURAL FACTOR IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION STRATEGIES

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The first part of this paper aims at defining general criteria for different typologies of language situations and language educational solutions. Criteria and solutions will be examined in the light of some twenty years of educational language assumptions and "paradoxes." The second part will introduce a number of specifications for language policy criteria to be discussed and evaluated as new guidelines for "internal" and "external" foreign language teaching policies (Zuanelli Sonino 1991).

1. TYPOLOGIES OF LANGUAGE SITUATIONS, SOCIOCULTURAL PROBLEMS, AND LANGUAGE NEEDS

One basic aim of this paper is to demonstrate the need to reverse foreign language teaching strategies, from the emphasis on the achievement of linguistic cultural contents to an emphasis on sociocultural goals. The implication of this effort is the review of current "internal" foreign language policies (namely those within each national state—the national state language community), as well as "external" foreign language policies (namely those conducted by each national state community as regards the selection of second and/or foreign languages in educational curricula). An international comparison of educational patterns allows us to forecast and prevent situations of conflict among major, minor, and minority languages.

1.1. Data, Trends, and "Paradoxes"

Indirect estimates of plurilingualism in the world may be summed up quantitatively as follows (Walker 1984; Ferguson et al. 1977). In Africa there are estimated to be 1,000 languages, out of which there are 100 different Bantu languages in the Congo and 394 in Nigeria. There are 760 languages in New Guinea. There are over 18 million alloglot speakers belonging to 23 major mother tongues and 40 to 50 language groups in the United States. In Europe there are 50 major languages; in 1978 in the city of London over 100 languages were recorded among children of school age. There are over 500 languages in South America.

As for Italy, in 1981 the BGIDM considered these minority languages still vital on the national territory: Albanian, Catalan, Franco-Provençal, German, Greek, Serbo-Croatian, and Slovene, besides the Gypsy languages Romany and Sinti. To these one must add the languages of the thousands of immigrants from different countries (Maghreb, the Cape Verde Islands, the Philippines, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South America, etc.) as well as the "dialects" of the different regions of Italy that are not geographical varieties of the national language.

The educational counterpart of diffused plurilingualism is the very controversial notion of "literacy" and the defense of the "mother-tongue" principle. The relativism of the notion of literacy is evident in the confrontation of arguments for debate according to the situation of advanced postindustrial societies and that of "emerging" third world countries (Zuanelli Sonino 1989b). The function and the scope of "orality" as well as of "literacy" have still to be assessed.

Terminological distinctions are preliminary to any decision making. What are the role and function of local, supraregional, international languages; major, minor, minority languages; modern, classical, "religious" languages; standardized and nonstandardized languages; national, official, and vehicular languages; spoken and written, only spoken and only written languages; autochthonous and immigrant languages? (For an overall picture of "literacy" problems, see Zuanelli Sonino 1989a.)

1.2. Criteria for a Comparison of Plurilingual Situations

Four basic criteria help to define the overall pattern for a typology of plurilingualism. (These criteria have been applied to the analysis of the Italian situation; see Zuanelli Sonino 1986b, 1989c, 1990).

The *geographical* criterion serves to define the notion of local and regional languages as opposed to languages of wider communication. The jurilinguistic implication of the geographical criterion is the highly debated issue of the relation among language, geography, and politics (for a recent debate, see Mar-Molinero and Stevenson 1991).

The *jurilinguistic* criterion allows for the traditional distinction between national and/or official languages, with four major implications:

- Legal status differs from one language to another, whether implicitly or explicitly.
- The legal status of a language/variety may be different in different countries.
- The legal status of a language/variety may differ from one region to another within the same country.
- Many languages/varieties have no legal status at any institutional level.

In general, national languages have official status (e.g. Italian in Italy), but this is not always the case (e.g. Romansh in Switzerland).

These considerations have stimulated interest in "societal education" to the distinction between "language rights" and the "rights of languages" (see Zuanelli Sonino 1991).

A third criterion is the *linguistic/functional/communicative* one. As far as language vitality is concerned, major/international/national languages may be generally apposed to local minority languages on the one hand and to classical and/or religious languages (Greek, Latin, Hebrew, classical Arabic, etc.) on the other.

Finally, the fourth criterion is the *social status* of languages as assessed by the language community and perceived by different groups of speakers (for the notion of schizoglossia and the need to achieve conscious polyglossia, see Zuanelli Sonino 1986a). This perception has to become conscious so as to determine motivated choices in language policy. The social "value" of a language is directly connected with its social function, which is only indirectly dependent on its juridical status (see the case of Irish).

This consideration explains why the notion of cultural identity is an ambiguous one. First, it cannot be assumed that one language is equivalent with one, just one, culture. Second, the same language may serve functions of unification for one group and separateness for another (Italian in Australia as opposed to dialects of Italian in Italy).

1.3. The Educational "Theoreme" and Language Education Paradoxes

The defense of the principle of "mother-tongue education" in all contexts in the world is at the basis of all the different curricula of plurilingual education (for a discussion and a typology, see Zuanelli Sonino 1990). Today, at some forty years' distance from the enunciation of the UNESCO principle, we must record the actual trends and some inevitable paradoxes.

The difficult process of linguistic and cultural integration in multilingual settings—the inevitable reduction of the number of languages to be standardized in former colonial countries, the very choice of one variety of a language rather than another—is strongly conditioned in most cases by the economic and social subordination of language minorities (see Gomes de Matos 1989 and Kashoki 1989; in general, for the issue of language and social control, see Mey 1991). This leads to the phenomenon of relinguistization and re-ethnicization on behalf of first generations of autochthonous and/or immigrant/minority groups (see Fishman 1985).

The mechanism of intergenerational continuity is usually connected with the rediscovery of cultural identity and is especially evident with race and religious factors. Nonmainstream linguistic education therefore takes on the meaning of detachment from mainstream culture and of social protest against mainstream education, fundamentalism, environmentalism, and so on (Fishman 1989).

In the European context the reinforcement of linguistic and sociocultural centralism is opposed by the revival of linguistic and cultural regionalism. This trend presents a twofold opposite movement: the revival of autochthonous sociocultural minorities and the establishment of more or less recent immigrant communities (in France, Germany, Great Britain, etc.) and new economic immigration from former Communist countries and the Southern Hemisphere.

On the one hand, therefore, the tendency toward economic, political, and cultural integration is institutionally represented by the European Economic Community; on the other hand, (re)search for original cultural identity is politically embodied by new regionalist parties.

The paradox lies in the twofold value of the notion of identity. The new mother country of welfare pushes toward the reduction of diversity and the construction of a wider supraregional cultural identity. The hidden implication is that this process—namely, economic and social integration—may foster the renunciation of the original culture. On the other hand, the growth of new social rights implies the accentuation of separate identities and the promotion of linguistic pluralism. The question is, Is it possible to maintain a separate linguistic and cultural identity in a unifying social and economic context?

Moreover, the rapid spread of means and channels of communication fosters processes of cultural hybridization and European relinguistization. The trend is clearly perceptible in the growing power of English as a language of international communication, especially in educational contexts where it is advocated as a lingua franca for new generations (e.g. in Switzerland and Holland). Given this trend, one may wonder whether assimilation by an international language is less dangerous for minority (regional) languages than assimilation by dominant national languages. In any case, the very notion of a monolithic cultural identity breaks down.

2. TOWARD NEW SOCIOCULTURAL STRATEGIES FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The consequence of this complex process of redefining identities is the redefinition of traditional educational "myths" and certainties. Plurilingual curricula that involve the presence of a second minority or neighboring language and an international language together with the "mother tongue" (national major or regional minor) must face current assumptions as regards the objectives and tools of language education.

2.1. Taxonomic Educational and Didactic Goals

A taxonomy of plurilingual education curricula allows for the summing up of the following leading criteria:

- the function of languages in the curriculum (namely, as language-object of instruction or instrument of instruction)
- the quantitative presence of each language in the curriculum
- the presence of languages in the regular school schedule or as an extraschedule activity
- the communicative-educational function of languages (for vocational or high-level instruction), vehicular languages (for adult education), and so on
- the "communicative" goals of the instruction (oral and/or written skills, "special" or "specialized" languages)

The taxonomy of educational goals corresponds to the taxonomy of curriculum constituents:

- the notion of language skills (oral and written)
- methodological approaches (structural, situational, notional-functional) as related to objectives/tasks/skills
- the "derived" nature of the sociocultural component of foreign language teaching (from the old notion of civilization to the list of discrete cultural contents)

This particular aspect has to be rethought in the light of new trends and strategies.

2.2. Didactic Strategy and the Choice of Specific Cultural Strategy

Our final considerations aim at verifying the impossibility of didactic objectives separate from a clearly defined educational strategy.

The necessary and greatly pursued objective of oral competence, for instance, should be reassessed according to the sociocultural strategy where the objective may have no specific "meaning" per se (classical Arabic, religious Mandarin, Latin, etc.). Special "skills" may concern modes of use of a language: reading aloud, for instance, for religious or familiar purposes and events. Spoken languages for ordinary communicative purposes must be clearly differentiated from corresponding written varieties.

In a multilingual curriculum the cultural and linguistic function of second and foreign languages must be clearly defined. In situations of latent conflict this also means that language choices should be de-emotionalized by trying to achieve symmetrical bilingualism and paying attention to specific cultural features and stereotypes (Nelde 1991).

In external and internal language policies, the choice of languages must not represent a form of political or socioeconomic control of weaker groups, such as minority and immigrant ones (on language policies as forms of social control, see Mey 1991 and Watts 1992).

The overall goal for multiple identity (Haarmann 1991) must be to generate new methodological and didactic procedures.

Finally, different languages in the curriculum must not be in competition with each other as to linguistic-communicative objectives. A differentiation of sociocultural goals may have a beneficial impact on educational results.

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LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGES IN THE UNITED STATES: NEEDS, CAPACITIES, AND STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

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This paper explores policy and planning issues with regard to developing and strengthening the capacity of the United States to respond to the need to deliver language instruction in foreign languages that fall outside the primary focus of the country's educational system. In the United States such languages are termed the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs).[1]

While considerable efforts have been expended to provide a national capacity in the LCTLs, the position taken herein is that such efforts have been and continue to be of only limited success. The primary aim of the discussion here is to present a fresh approach to developing an architecture and a set of strategies, in the form of a national plan, for providing instructional capacity in the LCTLs that seeks to overcome past and present problems. Once described, past and current strategies are compared against this proposed plan so as to justify its need. Finally, a brief description of several ongoing strategies that fit the general scheme of a national plan is offered to demonstrate the feasibility of developing such a national plan.

Such terms as *national needs* and *national capacity* are often used rather loosely in such discussions, so a bit of clarification is useful from the outset. We use the term *national needs* in a rather narrow sense to refer to needs defined as numbers of experts, specific skills, and determined levels of usable competence in a given language. By *competence* is meant the capacity necessary to perform a range of occupationally or professionally relevant communicative tasks with members of another cultural and linguistic community using the language of that community. Such tasks may include interpersonal or interpretative communication, and the type of usage may well range from diplomacy to business to the academic to the scientific, as examples. Indeed, it is possible for such needs to be addressed in part by machine translation or other such technological means, but the discussion here will be restricted to developing the language competence of a cadre of the broader citizenship of the country. This definition of national needs should be distinguished from other general-education rationales typically offered in the United States for foreign language study, such as the study of a foreign language for reasons of personal fulfillment, ameliorating ethnocentrism and promoting an appreciation of cultural diversity, developing an understanding of linguistic systems and language itself, better understanding one's own language and its structure, or developing higher-order skills and analytic capabilities. This is not to say that such goals are not laudable, only that they do not fit within our definition of satisfying national needs as defined above.

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[1] Within the broader context of language policy, such a topic belongs more properly in the foreign language realm than in the realm of domestic linguistic concerns, where such issues as the status of minority languages and the development of language standards dominate, though these two realms are not necessarily always distinct and can even be complementary (e.g. Spanish in the United States, English in India).

By *national capacity* we refer to the ability of the country to respond to demands for instruction in particular languages for whatever reason, including the ability to create instruction in languages not currently or generally offered. National capacity is seen here as the ability to respond to constant or changing national needs as defined above.

1. THE BROADER CONTEXT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES

Any understanding of the unique policy and planning issues related to the development of a national LCTL capacity must be seen against the backdrop of the more general context of foreign language study in the United States. We offer a brief overview before going on to discuss the LCTLs themselves.

1.1. Sources for Providing National Capacity

Any assessment of the country's general capacity to communicate in foreign languages and to cope with original texts in these languages is complex, involving as it does a range of tasks and modalities. If one leaves aside the whole question of computer-mediated and assisted language services, the question can be reduced to the number of people with an appropriate level of expertise in the language. This competence in the language can be native or "nativoid"—the result of having been born and raised in the target culture or in a foreign-language-speaking household abroad, respectively—or it can be the result of an educational or training process in this country. To be sure, recent immigrants and Americans who have preserved their home-country languages do provide a viable source of linguistic competence in the United States, where they work as translators, as interpreters, in government agencies, and in the private sector in various occupations. However, because of their sometimes limited ability in English and, perhaps, their lack of familiarity with their new home country, they have never been considered the sole or even the primary source of U.S. language capacity.

With regard to formal instruction in foreign languages, at least five systems can be identified:

1. government language training programs designed for employees of government agencies, focused generally on military, intelligence, and diplomatic needs but including such agencies and departments as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Agriculture, and the Drug Enforcement Agency

2. a system of proprietary-school language delivery, often but not exclusively aimed at professionals needing minimal language skills for business, travel, and tourism

3. the educational language system

4. a much less formal educational auxiliary system on the fringes of the educational system, including special summer programs, study-abroad programs, language courses for nontraditional learners such as those offered in university extension programs, self-study programs within educational institutions, and the like

5. a system, generally quite informal, for the preservation and development of the home-country languages of immigrants and their descendants

Theoretically, any endeavor at delivering national foreign language capacity must take all of these systems into account.

1.2. The Structure of the U.S. Educational System

Of these systems, the educational system is the most pervasive in terms of instructional programs and learners; and indeed the educational system is quite central to the national capacity in foreign languages by virtue of the pool of language, linguistic, and pedagogical expertise that it provides not only for itself but for the other four systems as well.

With regard to language policy and planning, several observations about the structure and conduct of the U.S. educational system are worth noting. The U.S. educational system is quite decentralized: there is no Ministry of Education, no system of national exams required for graduation at any level of the system, and no nationally mandated curriculum for subject matter. The private higher-education and K–12 school systems are heavily based on each institution's particular educational philosophy and mission, though nearly all institutions share much of a common vision with regard to teaching, research, subject matter, standards, and the like. The state-supported schools and the public schools are, of course, influenced by the state government and its funding, through state-level education departments and other administrative offices. Local mandates of over fifteen thousand school districts at the K–12 level are jealously guarded. Also, there is much latitude for local control of the internal affairs of state-supported institutions of higher learning.

Likewise, since the federal government can influence foreign language instruction within the educational system, its role too deserves a brief description. Federal funding for education is minuscule and more directive than controlling. The federal role is essentially collaborative in that it attempts to influence the national system through dispersion of its monies to the fifty states or to the many hundreds of separate institutions through a process of consultation and collaboration such that the final decision on the dispersion of funds is typically turned over to panels consisting of members of the educational system.

Foreign languages periodically become the focus of federal legislation, and several federal agencies play one role or another. The most powerful program with regard to foreign language is Title VI of the Higher Education Act, which will be discussed below. In addition, the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) and the Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching (FIRST) sometimes provide monies or the opportunity to compete for monies for research dealing with foreign languages, or to stimulate innovation and curricular improvement in the foreign languages, including the establishment of model programs. The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in its education section likewise provides funds for the professional development of foreign language educators as well as for curricular improvement and program seeding.

However, in this environment of a highly decentralized educational system and a highly consultative federal role, the entire notion of a federally mandated top-down national policy to address national needs for foreign language study is quite alien: it is not the aim of the federal government, and would be impossible to implement in such a highly decentralized and locally managed system in any case. More possible and realistic is the formation of an informal policy, or at least planning, through such mechanisms as horizontal and vertical consensus within the educational system, between the education establishment and its representatives who deal with the government agencies and with the national political process, between federal agencies and the education establishment over funding priorities, between the education establishment and private funders, and the like.

1.3. Mainstream Foreign Language Education in the United States

Perhaps the greatest single factor confronting the development of a national capacity in the LCTLs is that such development must compete with an educational system heavily focused on the teaching and learning of three European languages, French, German, and Spanish. It is estimated that approximately 94–95 percent of all enrollments at the college level, and over 99 percent of all enrollments at the K–12 level, are in these three languages. Thus, any policy or planning to develop a capacity in the LCTLs through reliance on the educational system must address the fact that most resources for foreign language study are directed to these three languages. For many LCTLs the scarcity of expertise, the lack of student interest, and perhaps the modest number of language specialists needed to address national needs suggest that they are quite unlikely to be incorporated into the foreign language education mainstream and, thus, that other development strategies will be necessary. Recently a few LCTLs, such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian, have actually entered the fringes of the mainstream foreign language education system, and indeed various strategies have been and are being pursued to move them further into this domain.

However, it is not at all clear that the mainstream foreign language education system is designed to address national needs as defined above, and thus blindly pushing the LCTLs into this system may not create the desired capacity. It can be argued that the traditional foreign language education system was never intentionally designed to address national needs as we have defined them, but rather was designed to address educational needs. In this context priority is on the educational value of foreign language study regardless of its ultimate employment in addressing national needs. It is for this reason that the traditional system presents a rich and varied rationale for foreign language study such as the understanding of other cultures, the promotion of the appreciation of domestic cultural diversity, the development of analytical skills, and especially the appreciation of the achievements of other cultures, particularly the arts and literature. Moreover, the choice of three Western European languages, and particularly these three European languages, clearly reveals an emphasis on past heritage rather than future ability to deal with an ever-impinging world far beyond Western Europe and Latin America. Additionally, because the primary focus of the system is educational experience rather than national needs, there is no compelling reason to bring large numbers of students to high levels of competence; and indeed the traditional foreign language education system has not done this (Lambert 1989).

A second and prominent factor affecting the traditional language education system is the general disregard for foreign language skills by the American populace. Since the rest of the world is busy learning English, and since the United States is largely isolated from direct contact with and easy access to other countries, the motivation and perceived need for foreign language study is rather weak.[2]

To sum up, the educational system seems to address national language needs in only an incidental manner. It has a range of quite legitimate educational goals as primary, as well as a powerful capacity to offer instruction in the commonly taught languages not intentionally selected to address national needs. Nevertheless, the educational institutions in the United States definitely have the capacity to address national needs directly if they so wish.

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[2] Using language requirements as a metric, Lambert (1989) notes in his survey of four hundred institutions of higher learning that 68 percent of the universities and 40 percent of the baccalaureate colleges have a language requirement for graduation, and even in these cases the requirement is generally restricted to only some segments of the student body. Only 9 percent of the universities and 22 percent of the colleges have a foreign language requirement for all students. Only 13 percent of the community colleges have a foreign language requirement. Moreover, Lambert's analysis of a national sample of thirty-two colleges, based on 8,692 transcripts, revealed that only about one-half of the students at four-year institutions took any foreign language at all, and of those who did, 40 percent took only the first year of instruction, a third took the equivalent of two years' instruction, and only 15 percent took upper-level courses. His study revealed that at the secondary level only 60 percent of students enrolled in the first year of language study went on to the second year, and only 21 percent of this 60 percent went on to the third year.

2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LCTLS IN THE UNITED STATES

2.1. Federally Funded Programs

The earliest efforts to strengthen expertise in the LCTLs developed as a result of World War II, through the establishment of the Army's Specialized Training Programs (ASTP). During the subsequent cold war period strictly military concerns were superseded by more general national security interests, especially intelligence gathering, by an increasing attention in academia to a modern counterpart in language and culture to the more traditional concerns with philology and the civilizations of antiquity, and perhaps by what can best be described as a national awakening of the need to know more about the rest of the world. There seems to have been a complex and cyclical flow of the training of language specialists and language training programs in a number of LCTLs between the universities and the government. Ultimately, the federal government did assume initial responsibility for addressing security as well as foreign policy concerns by increasing the number of languages seen to be of critical importance, by mounting its own language training capacity through the spread of language training to a variety of relevant agencies, such as the military's Defense Language Institute, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the Foreign Service Institute.

In 1958 came Title VI of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), representing a partnership between the academic community and the federal government that continues to this day.[3] The goal of this act was to create a cadre of language and area specialists that would in turn train other specialists, thus promoting more widespread expertise in the languages and cultures of countries around the world, especially outside of Western Europe.

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[3] Lambert (1991) has recently summarized the evolution of Title VI since its inception, detailing particularly the efforts to diffuse the focus on advanced specialists to the larger educational system and the public at large through the provisions for outreach; through prioritizing area studies disciplines; through a distinction in the act between undergraduate centers and "comprehensive centers," which include both undergraduate and graduate training; and through the promotion of language proficiency testing standards to improve language instruction and introduce more accountability into the monies allocated to foreign language study. At the same time, as a response to economic competitiveness as contrasted with strategic concerns, the aim of the act has been broadened to include international studies and business such that there are now nineteen centers of international business education.

2.2. Recent Trends

The end of the cold war has seen a growing concern of the United States with global competitiveness and a national security focus that has shifted from the threat of communism to the sorts of regional conflicts characterized by ethnic strife, nuclear proliferation to third world countries, terrorism, and the like. This situation has ushered in a renewed and somewhat different rationale for the importance of the LCTLs. First, there has been a shift of the impetus for instruction in the LCTLs beyond security interests and beyond strictly federally inspired leadership out to the broader populace. The business community, the academic community, state education agencies, parents, and a host of other segments of the society now see America's economic future and its ability to address global issues in an international context far beyond Western Europe. At the same time, there have been recent efforts to revamp significant portions of Title VI as well as to use other federal initiatives beyond Title VI to bring at least some LCTLs into the national mainstream.[4]

2.3. Limits to the Success of Past LCTL Development Strategies

Through the course of its history Title VI has not managed to build in the United States the required capacity in foreign language, as evidenced by the spate of pronouncements and new federal legislation aimed in this direction. In terms of product, after all these many years of federal intervention and the more current intense efforts of the educational system itself, the study of LCTLs remains on the margin of foreign language education. With only an estimated 6–8 percent of all postsecondary enrollments in languages other than French, German, and Spanish, and with less than 1 percent of enrollments outside these languages in the K–12 system, it is clear that the quantity of the product is dismal, to say the least.

Moreover, these figures do not indicate the extremely high attrition rates in LCTL study as revealed by the recent National Foreign Language Center surveys of Chinese,

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[4] Recent years have seen the addition of some LCTLs to the concerns of federal programs other than Title VI. FIPSE has targeted Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Korean for enhancement at the postsecondary level. NEH has likewise targeted Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian for enhancement, largely through teacher training, for both the K–12 and the college level. FIRST recently included Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian in competition directed at the K–12 system. In 1992 the Foreign Language Assistance Act was passed, which directs the United States Education Department to pass monies to the states for the establishment of model programs in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Korean within the K–12 system. The most striking new addition to this trend is the National Security Education Program, designed to promote the study of languages and societies outside of Western Europe. At least at this point in time, this new program would send undergraduates abroad for immersion in other countries, would provide fellowships for graduate students involved in the study of such countries, and would provide funds to strengthen international studies more broadly on U.S. campuses.

Japanese, and Russian.[5] For the tiny number who begin instruction in the languages, only a fraction continue to more advanced study leading to the sorts of competencies required by national needs.

With respect to quality of output of the system, specifically the language competence of its graduates, a combination of factors complicate the process. These factors include the difficulty of many of the LCTLs, the cultural and linguistic distance between English-speaking America and the languages and cultures represented by the LCTLs, and the obvious lack of resources devoted to these languages when compared with the more commonly taught languages.

If we take Russian as an illustration, the output can be summarized as follows. While few educational institutions collect data on the output of their Russian language courses and programs, there do exist data that are revealing in this regard. One such set of data comes from the Educational Testing Service (ETS 1984). In order to validate its new Russian language reading and listening achievement test, ETS administered the instrument nationwide to 1,490 high school and 1,135 college students. In addition, the results of the testing were correlated with the Interagency Language Roundtable/American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages guidelines metric.

These data clearly indicate that approximately 70 percent of students, after four years of college Russian, fail to reach an advanced level in listening, while almost half fall short of that level even in reading.[6] With regard to speaking, the only source of data available is the American Council of Teachers of Russian/National Foreign Language Center database, which gives us a picture of the state of speaking ability of students who have learned Russian in university programs. Of the 658 students who entered the ACTR semester program, approximately 86 percent were tested at the intermediate-plus level and lower. Viewing these results from the point of view of years of Russian taken at the college level by these students, approximately the same percentage (87 percent) of students who completed four years of instruction were at the intermediate-plus level or lower. Particularly in light of the fact that this sample of Russian language students in the United States who choose to study Russian in-country is self-selected and most likely represents the more successful of the students, one can assume that 13 percent of students with four years of college Russian reaching an advanced level in speaking is maximum.

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[5] For Chinese, see Moore with Walton and Lambert 1992; for Japanese, see Jorden with Lambert 1991; a similar survey of Russian language instruction is currently nearing completion at the National Foreign Language Center.

[6] The American Council of Teachers of Russian preprogram data for reading and listening show even a greater percentage of students to be below the advanced level than do those of ETS, and so the ETS data may be taken as the best-case scenario.

To summarize, the proportion of students with four years of college Russian failing to reach an advanced level of competence is 45 percent for reading, 70 percent for listening, and 87 percent for speaking.

Given the fact that the advanced level is considered only the minimal level of functional ability, it is clear that our educational system for the most part is not turning out linguistically competent students in listening and speaking, while only half our college graduates are minimally competent readers of Russian. Since Russian is an Indo-European language, one can surmise that even reaching these levels of competence would be challenging for non-European LCTLs such as Chinese and Japanese.

3. THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL PLAN

The creation of a national capacity to deliver instruction in the LCTLs requires a developed field architecture created and maintained by nationally coordinated policy, planning, and funding strategies. The concerted effort required derives from a number of characteristics of the LCTLs, some structural with regard to the delivery of instruction, and some related to the nature of the languages and thus the subsequent instructional demands for their study.

First, it is clear that the capacity to offer instruction in the LCTLs is dictated by the global or multiregional scope of U.S. policy demands. The policy and planning issues inherent in such a mission must be contrasted with those characteristic of a very limited regional focus, as is the case in the language policy of many European countries as well as mainstream foreign language education in the United States. Likewise, the issues involved must be contrasted with those policy and planning considerations that underlie instruction in an international language such as English. The planning problems of providing, through a centralized educational system, instruction in an international language and/or two or three other foreign languages, especially when they are cognate to the base language of the country, cannot easily be compared with the complexity inherent in formulating a system capable of providing instruction in from 80 to 150 foreign languages representing every geographical region of the world. Planning and policy issues are rendered even more difficult when some attempt is made to provide storage capacity for future contingencies.

The vast number of languages included immediately suggests problems that typical language planning will not have encountered. For example, the number of learners for any given language is likely to be small, which in turn raises questions of recruitment and financial incentives. The same issues of recruitment and financial incentives arise for providing the human expertise to create and run programs. Since the expertise is likely to be spread thin across institutions and delivery systems, the access of potential language learners to a dispersed expertise becomes quite problematic: one can study Spanish at nearly any high school or college in the United

States, in any proprietary school, within the educational auxiliary system, or within any of the government training programs, but access to Chinese is much more restricted, access to Yoruba even more so. Taken together, the low number of learners for a specific language, the rarity of the expertise, and its dispersion geographically all suggest that considerable resources will be required for a seemingly small (in terms of numbers) payback. At the same time, without intense planning, it is quite probable that the competition for resources among languages will be fierce, and thus that any resources found must be maximized.

The difficulty of many of the LCTLs means a much longer training period relative to European languages to reach equivalent levels of language competency. From a planning perspective, the combination of scarce and dispersed resources with a longer training period means that the LCTL instructional system must be much more carefully articulated with regard to the learner than is the case with mainstream language training. In addition, the difficulty of these languages brings with it an inherently high attrition rate, suggesting that the quality of instruction is crucial.

Moreover, as Walton (1992) has suggested, instruction in non-Western languages requires a much more complex pedagogical approach than that employed to teach languages that are cognate to the learner's native language. There is unlikely any LCTL language program in the United States that does not require the participation of a native-speaking teacher of the target language, and some programs are managed exclusively by such teachers. Non-native teachers are generally considered inadequate linguistic and cultural models for such languages, and so few foreigners reach high levels of competence in these languages that they could never provide a supply system in any case. This heavy reliance on native-speaking teachers again raises a recruitment problem, raises serious problems in pedagogical training, and certainly has cost factors not often found in the teaching of European languages.

In sum, the number of languages is large, the number of likely clients small, the expertise spread thin, the resources relative to mainstream language courses in the education quite limited, and the languages challenging to learn.

3.1. The Components of a National Architecture

The central organizing unit for purposes of planning and capacity enhancement in LCTL instruction is a given "language field" such as Chinese or Twi. Some language fields may be grouped together based on linguistic relationship or geographical proximity, such as Southeast Asia, Africa, or Eastern and Central Europe. In addition, one may as well consider "subfields," for example, the Burmese subfield of the Southeast Asian field. For discussion here, each distinct language potentially has a field.

Each field is characterized by an architecture consisting of an overarching superstructure as well as support mechanisms that comprise an infrastructure. This organization holds as well for contingency languages that may be in storage.

Since the LCTLs are numerous, dispersed across various instructional settings, and essentially locked out of the mainstream educational system, a reasonable goal is to attempt some sort of centralized planning for all the LCTLs as a single group. Thus, there is need for an overarching national LCTL superstructure to respond to national needs for these languages as a whole.

Each of these components is elaborated below.

3.1.1. Fieldwide Superstructure Components

3.1.1.1. The expertise base. We assume that no language can be adequately taught on a consistent basis without access to a body of knowledge of the language, of its containing culture, and of the process of learning it. This knowledge includes theoretical underpinnings, language-specific information, and the ability to apply this knowledge to the task of learning the given language in all contexts. This expertise base, then, will consist of adequate library holdings in the three areas; but primarily it is composed of scholars in the specified fields, ideally in contact with one another in some form of national and international network that provides information on specializations, publications, and the like. (See below.) Accordingly, a data bank is required that contains information on the availability of native speakers (numbers, location, dialect varieties, linguistic support structures such as "Saturday schools," and the like).

The expertise base is the sine qua non for language instruction. Without it, no program can be mounted. It then becomes the priority for development if the goal is to establish a national capacity in a set of languages that may or may not be offered at the present time. Given the fact that expertise takes years to create, planning for its development must be long-range, as is investment in it. Essentially, then, the expertise base for each language must be "stored" or "warehoused" for use upon demand.

3.1.1.2. A field-specific language learning framework. The LCTLs in general, and specific language fields in particular, do not have the resources to churn in endless instructional experimentation, as often seems the case with the mainstream languages or with English as a second or foreign language. Nor are there the resources to develop competing instructional materials for a given language: given the low market demand for LCTLs, commercial publishers are quite hesitant to fund even one such set of materials. In addition, there are too few resources to experiment in teacher training with various models, and too few to embark upon a multitude of assessment strategies. Developing even one standardized test for a language such as Hindi is expensive and time-consuming; and given the small number of test takers, it would take years to norm the test.

These limiting conditions suggest that the pedagogical experts in each field need to work collectively to set instructional standards and guidelines for a given language by developing an agreed-upon "language learning framework" that sets clear, explicit goals; that is designed through the efforts of those who comprise the expertise base of the field to reflect the best thinking in second language acquisition (SLA) with a primary focus on self-managed learning; that provides the flexibility for the framework to be adapted by varying local program conditions; and that provides for systematic assessment and feedback, both for learners and for the improvement of the instructional program.

Note that what is proposed here is a "learning framework" as opposed to a "teaching framework." The focus on learning is meant to ground instruction in SLA theory, research, and application. For the LCTLs this strong emphasis on learning is quite necessary. First, given the difficulty of the languages, classroom contact will never be sufficient to reach higher levels of competence, so extraprogram work on the language through self-managed learning becomes imperative. Second, no matter how much formal training is provided, it is clear that most language growth will occur over the learner's lifetime in noninstructional settings, thus strengthening the rationale for training in self-managed learning. In fact, to reach higher levels of competence and to gain genuine understanding of the culture for purposes of communication, study in the target-language culture will be a necessity, and such study requires the self-management of learning.

The purpose of a fieldwide learning framework is to focus scarce resources in the most efficient manner possible as regards curricular design, the development of instructional materials, the application of new teaching technologies, teacher training, and assessment and research related to language acquisition. At the same time, the framework acts as a constraining force on unguided experimentation so that knowledge and experience accumulate in a systematic manner. Of course, the framework is not static but in a constant state of change: what counts is that it serves as a fieldwide reference or base point.

3.1.1.3. Fieldwide strategic planning for development. A given language field needs knowledge of itself and of where it must move as regards development. This entails the collection of data on current resources (human, material, and financial), data on enrollments, and an assessment of what steps are required to strengthen the field. In particular, such fieldwide planning should be based on an assessment of the field's expertise base and its infrastructure capacity, a topic discussed below. At the same time, the development of a language learning framework gives such a plan direction as regards instructional needs.

3.1.1.4. A fieldwide organizational structure. In order to collect expertise, particularly when it is rare and dispersed, to develop a fieldwide language learning framework and a strategic plan, some centralized structural mechanism is necessary. This is all the more true since a field encompasses the expertise and instructional resources of the five national capacity systems noted earlier. Instruction in a given language is likely to be offered in the government system, in the proprietary system, in the educational system, and in the auxiliary system. In addition, it may be that native-born speakers of this language are embarked upon the preservation of their language through Saturday schools and enrollment in the educational system, and thus these efforts should be encouraged as one route to national capacity in the language.

Since such components as an expertise base, a language learning framework, and a strategic development plan are fieldwide in nature, all five systems require some sort of centralized planning hub. In addition, given the dispersion of expertise and programs within the vast educational system, there must again be some way to address fieldwide concerns and planning across educational institutions.

The function of such a field organization is to collect data on the entire field (personnel, programs, enrollments, graduates, postgraduate employment, student competencies, study-abroad opportunities, and the like), to ascertain fieldwide needs in maintaining and upgrading national capacity, including needed research, needed instructional materials, needed training to establish standards and assessment strategies, and so on. More than anything else, however, the role of such an organization is essentially coordination through networking.

At the same time, such an organization serves as the national voice to national policymakers and funders as to needs, and the priorities of these needs, in maintaining and upgrading the field.

3.1.2. A Fieldwide Infrastructure

The superstructure components of a field are concerned with deep-level coordination and planning. However, in order to implement instructional programs, a number of supporting components must ideally be in place. These infrastructure components range from critical to optional, but it is clear from studying the more powerful LCTL language fields, as regards capacity, that the more such components are in place, the stronger the field becomes. At the same time, any one component itself can be viewed as residing on a scale of strength from weak to more fully developed. These components include the following:

3.1.2.1. A fieldwide system for the transmission of expertise. The expertise base, necessary as it is, is only a base. When language programs are dispersed across the five capacity systems, the expertise created through disciplinary research must ultimately make its way through a range of specialists more concerned with the delivery of instruction than with research. At the first level of this chain are those who will develop instructional materials, train teachers, and design and maintain instructional programs. At the next level are those who instruct in formal settings at the level of the course, and among these practitioners there will again be a range of expertise from advanced to novice.

A strong infrastructure provides mechanisms that walk the expertise downstream in a systematic manner. At the higher level this transmission of expertise is provided by graduate programs in language and literature departments, linguistics departments, and area studies departments that combine training in linguistics, intercultural communication, and SLA so as to create and constantly resupply a language field with new sources of expertise. Much the same can be said of the need to transmit such expertise through graduate schools of education charged with preparing K–12 teachers to offer instruction in the LCTLs. Further downstream are the fieldwide in-service and preservice teacher-training programs typically offered in summer institutes. In addition to teacher training, however, an array of mechanisms are ideally in place to promote professional development both through fieldwide, centralized mechanisms and through local institutional contexts as well.

3.1.2.2. Area studies connections: Title VI. In those cases where LCTL instruction is closely linked with, or even dependent on, area studies—as in the case, for example, of the national network of language and area studies resource centers located at major universities and funded under Title VI of the federal Higher Education Act—a strong infrastructure reveals active collaboration between the area studies and the language instruction specialists, in matters both intellectual and structural.

On the intellectual side, as SLA has moved from a strict concern with the mastery of purely linguistic features to language use in authentic cultural context, instruction in the LCTLs benefits from the cultural expertise of the area studies specialists. At the same time, language programs focused on national needs as defined earlier provide instruction, particularly at the advanced levels, in such content areas as business, economics, and the social and behavioral sciences in addition to the traditional content in literature, and strong ties with these disciplines are vital.

From the political perspective, area studies provides the greatest contribution to language instruction by supporting the latter with regard to advocacy of needs, by demanding expertise in linguistics and SLA, and by providing the resources and support for career development, teacher training, materials development, assessment strategies, and other such infrastructure concerns.

3.1.2.3. Resources for the production of instructional materials. Instructional materials, including textbooks for use at both lower and higher levels of instruction, reference grammars, and dictionaries are of central concern to the LCTLs. In some cases the instructional materials themselves serve as a de facto curriculum that at least gives some guidance to new and untrained teachers. A language field benefits not just from having such materials available or developing them sporadically, but from the capacity to mount a materials production industry. This capacity harkens back to expertise in such fields as linguistics, anthropology, and SLA and the transmission of this expertise to potential text developers.

The capacity of a field to produce materials that reflect the shared needs of the field logically suggests fieldwide collective data collection and planning, especially for low-enrollment languages, on just which sorts of materials are available, which are needed, what skills and levels are to be addressed, and on through a range of similar concerns. Obviously, the development of a language learning framework (a superstructure component; see above) greatly assists in a collaborative approach to the development of instructional materials.

A weak infrastructure is characterized by the lack of central, collective planning, by the development of text materials by individual developers working on their own perceptions of need without regard to fieldwide consultation, by the development of materials absent the requisite expertise and training in related disciplines, and by the production of competing texts in fields where resources are scarce.

For extremely low enrollment languages or languages where no materials exist, creating and maintaining the expertise discussed earlier amounts to a stored capacity that can be tapped when the need for materials arises.

In addition, as a part of the materials resource capacity, the LCTLs stand to benefit perhaps more than the more commonly taught languages by the applications to instructional contexts of new technologies, such as video, interactive video, CD ROM, and computer-based learning. Emphasis on building communicative competence in very different cultures is enhanced by the visual presentation of the culture. Self-directed learning using computer-driven technologies is extremely useful in language fields where the difficulty of the language requires considerable work outside classrooms and where there is often a shortage of trained teachers. In addition, the use of new technologies for developing print materials (e.g. desktop publishing) is again a mark of a strong infrastructure, given that commercial publishers are generally uninterested in producing text materials for a tiny number of customers.

3.1.2.4. Relationships with the home country of the language and culture. The home countries of the languages being taught in U.S. settings are a critical source of expertise, teachers, instructional materials, and the resources necessary to develop materials. A strong infrastructure is characterized by elaborated mechanisms that facilitate the flow of expertise, of experts of teachers, of materials, and of realia, including mechanisms for scholarly exchange in the language area, teacher and student exchange programs, and collaborative research. The more such mechanisms, and the more formal, the greater the likelihood that a given language field will have a continuous capacity to utilize these resources to the maximum.

From a language acquisition perspective, these countries serve as the source for study abroad, for advanced training in formal programs, and, through residence, for the development of occupationally relevant language skills, and as a host for collaborative research. Again, the more elaborated and formalized such programs, the greater the likelihood that the capacity of a language field is being enhanced.

One form such mechanisms can take is the creation of, or the providing of access to, organizations that focus specifically on such base-country/home-country relationships. In many cases a language field, especially one of the smaller fields, need not rely on its own efforts and resources but can rely for administrative and programmatic expertise on existing study-abroad and exchange organizations. The higher the enrollments and the more elaborated the home-country relationships, the greater the likelihood that a field will want to set up its own programs, a task that logically fits within the functions of the field's national organization.

3.1.2.5. International networks and organizations. Many LCTLs needed or offered in the United States are also of research and instructional interest in other countries. International networks and organizations built around a language field offer at least the opportunity for collective work in research and the development of expertise as well as for the sharing, and in some cases joint development, of instructional materials. In fact, one key function of international networks and organizations is to avoid duplication of effort in language fields that are low-enrollment internationally.

3.1.2.6. Relationship to the domestic ethnic community. Native speakers of LCTLs residing in the United States are contributing to national language capacity through employment in internationally oriented businesses, research institutes, or university programs, or through their work in translation and interpretation in both domestic and foreign contexts. In addition, however, they can also make a strong contribution to national capacity by being involved in one of the five national LCTL instructional delivery systems noted earlier, including the educational system. While they may well require training and education in certain facets of language instruction, they are obviously not in need of training in the target language itself. In order for language fields outside the principal LCTLs (where access to the native-speaking community is quite established) to benefit from the possible contribution of native speakers to their infrastructure, there must be a concerted effort to identify interested parties through some such system as volunteer registries—again, a very natural role for national field organizations to play. Part of this identification and registry effort is to maintain a storage capacity for languages currently not offered.

For second- or third- (and beyond) generation members of ethnic communities in the United States, a national policy, largely formulated without the direct involvement of the LCTL instruction fields, aimed at the preservation of these languages would naturally promote national capacity for language use. Where the LCTL fields come into play is their role in offering some form of formal instruction to members of these minorities such that minimal skills are preserved or, better, that such speakers reach advanced competence in their ethnic language. By definition, an LCTL language field encompasses such instruction. A language field with a strong infrastructure in this domain creates and maintains an expertise in addition to those noted earlier in the form of SLA research on the most effective way to provide for instructed language acquisition of limited-proficiency, nativelike speakers. This expertise is then translated into features of curriculum design, materials development, assessment procedures and instruments, the training of teacher trainers, and teacher training itself, among many such components of instruction, so that what is ultimately created and provided is either a separate pedagogical tradition or a distinct subcomponent of a field's general pedagogical tradition.

This specially tailored tradition is then manifested either in instructional programs designed exclusively for members of an ethnic community, such as Saturday schools, or in programs where such students enroll along with students with no prior home-life exposure to the language: government training programs, proprietary schools, the educational auxiliary system, and the educational system.

3.1.2.7. Standards and assessment: individuals, programs, fields. While the assessment of student linguistic abilities and instructional programs is a part of a strong pedagogical tradition, fieldwide planning and policy decisions are in need of fieldwide assessment for the purpose of feedback to the field itself as well as to policymakers and funders: where is the field headed, what is it accomplishing, where is it failing? A field with a strong infrastructure component in assessment and feedback provides mechanisms and procedures for assessing all the superstructure and infrastructure components discussed and for redressing weaknesses. Such an undertaking requires the constant collection and analysis of data on student performance with respect to one or more national metrics, program performance as related to student performance, the ongoing development and transmission of expertise, initiatives in career development, area studies connections, the production of instructional materials, relationships with the home country of the target language, international networks, policy and funding initiatives, and so forth. Not only are the data collected, but they are made available to the field on a regular basis so as to inform fieldwide planning.

3.1.2.8. Committed institutions. The most important component of field infrastructure is institutions committed to offering programs in the language, whether they be student or teacher training, regular academic or supplemental (like study abroad or distance education). Institutional commitment, in this regard, means that enrollment fluctuations are not grounds for discontinuing the programs. It assumes that the institution has invested for the long term in tenured faculty, perhaps graduate programs, even research and training centers, and the like. These institutions are known in the country as the main centers for the learning of a given language or group of languages, and they take pride in that reputation.

3.2. A National LCTL Architecture

3.2.1. Superstructure Components

At the national level a superstructure for all the LCTLs as a collective body can be viewed as consisting of the same components as for the language-specific fields.

3.2.1.1. The expertise base. At this level the expertise base that is to serve all the LCTLs, as well as the commonly taught languages, is made up of specialists and publications in the area of theoretical and applied linguistics, SLA, anthropology, psychology, cognition, and the like. This expertise represents the theoretical underpinning of the language learning and instructional field, regardless of the specific language involved.

3.2.1.2. The language learning framework. The National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL) has a continuing mandate to explore "collective solutions to common problems." At a June 1991 special task force meeting, it was agreed that the basic underlying premise upon which the discussion would proceed was that curriculum development, materials preparation, and teacher training depend on a clear and explicit definition of the goals of instruction: what is to be learned and how, when, and where the learning is to take place. Only after these issues are resolved can the actual preparation of syllabi and materials and the training of teachers be considered. While some work along these lines has been done for the most commonly taught languages, nothing exists that would serve as a model for languages that are not cognate with English—for example, languages like Chinese and Japanese, which offer a linguistic and cultural code unlike anything in French and Spanish.

Accordingly, in June 1991 twenty-five representatives of the member organizations of the NCOLCTL met for five days and developed a generic language learning framework. From this generic framework, language-field-specific versions can be, and have been, developed.[7]

3.2.1.3. A national LCTL organizational structure. The formulation and tracking of national policy priorities for the LCTLs lies outside the LCTL fields themselves, and no doubt such policy and needs issues would be best served by some sort of national advisory board representing the needs of LCTL end-users. However, there is much to be said for some sort of national inter-LCTL structure that brings all the various LCTL fields together under one umbrella, which in the United States is the NCOLCTL. The primary function of this organization is to coordinate LCTL-wide substantive and structural concerns. On the substantive side, the strengthening of each field's superstructure and infrastructure benefits from more collective work on shared problems, ranging from research to the development of language learning frameworks and the evolution of infrastructure components. In short, the various LCTL fields benefit from learning from and working with each other.

On the structural side, an organization like the NCOLCTL is the national repository of information and data on all the LCTL fields, tracks capacity needs and development for the LCTLs collectively, and serves as national voice for the LCTLs to policymakers, educators, and federal and private funders.

3.2.1.4. Strategic planning for the LCTLs collectively. Even if the specific LCTL fields were characterized by the superstructure and infrastructure components discussed above, the fact remains that from the viewpoint of national needs and capacity, these fields cannot themselves determine which languages at a given time are more vital to the national interest than others, nor can they determine the number of language experts needed, the functions required, the types of occupational areas most in need of such expertise, and the like. In fact, in the current laissez-faire system that prevails because of a lack of central planning for LCTL needs, these various fields compete with one another for resources, each by advocating the importance of its language and world region compared with all the others. In this national-needs-driven vacuum has arisen the strategy of ensuring the survival and growth of LCTL fields by building student enrollments. If policymakers have not identified a field as being critical to national interests, and if funds therefore do not flow, enrollments can be invoked as a rationale for providing resources and as evidence of a field's importance. By the same token, if enrollments dwindle or are quite small, in the absence of national policy planning and interest in the language, resources will surely not be supplied.

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[7] Thus far the development of field-specific frameworks is under way for Chinese, Japanese, and Russian.

This situation suggests the rather dire need for a coherent national policy and planning process directed toward the LCTLs as a single entity. In our view, such a strategic planning process would involve the following pieces:

1. Identification by policymakers from various sectors of the country—government, business, and the like—of a comprehensive set of languages deemed to be of current national need, coupled with an equally comprehensive list of languages for which a case for near-term need may be made. This identification procedure should be based not on the perceived needs of the language fields themselves nor on their own ranking of the importance of their languages to national needs, but rather on national needs as broadly defined by those who actually require trained language specialists for specific purposes. Quite probably, this list of languages would be large and might well correspond to those languages currently funded in various ways through Title VI.

2. A commitment to provide for all such languages the resources necessary to develop, maintain, and constantly renew an expertise base regardless of enrollments. This provision is intended to create an expertise loop, regardless of the need for or presence of language instruction programs, through the training of language specialists who then train the next generation. This function ideally would be assumed by the graduate programs now in place.

3. An ongoing process for ranking these languages, even in broad terms, with regards to national needs, with the understanding that the ranking is ever-changing.

4. A process for matching the ranked languages against their current capacity, as defined by in-place superstructure and infrastructure components and enrollment size, and then targeting resources for the enhancement of specific superstructure and infrastructure components.

By our analysis the LCTLs can at present be ranked in terms of superstructure/infrastructure and enrollments as follows:

Group 1: the principal less commonly taught languages (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian). These languages mirror, although on a much reduced scale, the commonly taught languages in being generally available in schools and universities around the country. The principal problem with these languages, as compared with the commonly taught languages, is their degree of difficulty, which makes it virtually impossible for students to reach a functional ability solely on the basis of academic programs in this country.

Group 2: the much less commonly taught languages. There are approximately thirty non–Western European/non–North American languages in the United States, each of which has undergraduate and graduate enrollments across the country ranging from one to several hundred (as per Modern Language Association fall 1990 statistics: Brod and Huber 1992). For these languages, instruction is available in only a handful of institutions across the country. These languages include Armenian, Czech, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Hindi-Urdu, Hungarian, Indonesian, Korean, Mongolian, Ojibwa, Persian, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Swahili, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Vietnamese, and Yoruba. These languages generally have a field architecture that is significantly weaker than that of the principal LCTLs; for example, most are represented collectively by a geographically defined organization (African, Southeast Asian) that is responsible for addressing the needs of not one but many languages.

Group 3: the least commonly taught languages. In addition to the languages mentioned above, the formal educational system in the United States offers approximately eighty least commonly taught languages, whose total national enrollments range from one hundred to the single digits. These languages, even more than the group described above, occupy a very marginal position in the educational system, being offered often at only one or two institutions across the United States in a given year, often on an on-demand, individual basis, with little or no field architecture.

Group 4: the rarely (or never) taught languages. Finally, there are many other of the world's several thousand languages that can be viewed as "critical" to our national needs and that are rarely or never taught in the United States. (For example, of the twenty-three languages assigned the highest priority by Africanists, only half a dozen are listed as taught in the fall of 1990.) For some of these languages, there is linguistic and anthropological expertise available; for many others, sufficient basic expertise is totally lacking, along with the other field architecture components.

This grouping can be taken, at first blush, as a statement of past demand and, accordingly, current resources. With the current dynamic situation in the world, this demand must constantly be updated. The national strategy outlined here, then, is a guide to meeting these changing needs.

4. RATIONALE: THE NEED FOR A NEW ARCHITECTURE AND STRATEGIES

The national planning process outlined above suggests the need for both a new architecture for LCTL instruction and storage and a new set of development and enhancement strategies for creating and maintaining this architecture. The rationale for the sorts of reform implied in a national planning process can be best appreciated when this proposed planning process is contrasted with the current architecture and accompanying strategies as discussed below.

4.1. Architecture: Organization by Field vs. Organization by Institutions

The proposed strategic planning initiative suggests that national capacity in the LCTLs is best developed and maintained by making each language field the primary unit of organization. As discussed above, a given field is characterized by a superstructure consisting of an expertise base, a fieldwide instructional framework, a strategic plan for development, and a fieldwide organization that implements the framework and the plan. Each field is also characterized by a set of support or infrastructure components ranging from those that are critically necessary to those that promote the evolution of field capacity. Moreover, the planning process calls for an inter-LCTL field architectural scheme that addresses the particular needs of the LCTLs and works from a categorization of LCTLs according to present needs and resources.

In this scheme, institutions are not the primary organizational units but rather units that are necessary to implement fieldwide concerns in local and diverse settings. Today, however, the reverse situation holds: LCTL capacity is organized by institutions that fragment fieldwide capacity by the idiosyncrasies of each institution. This fragmentation is quite evident in what can be characterized as horizontal and vertical diffusion of expertise and resources.

The first sort of diffusion and fragmentation is evident at the highest level of national capacity in the redundancy and lack of articulation across the five delivery systems noted earlier. The government training programs, the proprietary language system, the educational system and its auxiliary system, and the domestic ethnic language system all run on separate and often competing tracks, with at best only minimal interaction. The expertise base is decentralized; there is no agreed-upon fieldwide instructional framework, no overarching plan for field development, and only incidental linkage through existing but terribly weak teacher-based field organizations. Rather than any sort of fieldwide infrastructure, each system can only put in place institutional infrastructure depending on local expertise and available resources. In fact, the reliance on institutions inherently weakens and diffuses the educational auxiliary system including study abroad, summer programs, and the like, and has essentially excluded a systemic development of ethnic language capacity since this system largely lies outside any sort of formal institutional framework.

The lack of collective integration across these systems is further exacerbated by diffusion and competition within each system. Government agencies involved in LCTL language instruction such as the Defense Language Institute, the National Security Agency, the Foreign Service Institute, and the Central Intelligence Agency, while coordinating efforts in generic areas such as testing and standards, provide at best only sporadic coordination when it comes to a specific language field. Each agency is likely to develop its own instructional materials, to pursue technological applications of language instruction independently, to differ in curricular design for instruction in the same courses, to implement different types of teacher training for essentially the same sorts of courses, and so forth. Even so straightforward a matter as deciding which languages should be offered falls victim to interagency division.[*]

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[*] This problem has been recognized and addressed by the creation of the Center for the Advancement of Language Learning (CALL).

In addition to government training programs, federal funding agencies such as FIPSE, FIRST, and NEH are also pursuing enhancement of the Group 1 LCTLs with little centralized coordination or planning, thus increasing the likelihood of duplication not only with one another but, for some agencies, with Title VI programs managed by the United States Education Department.

Of course, such diffusion is practically the hallmark of the educational system, but the situation is in many ways more dire since the educational programs do not even have the rather standardized goals and common evaluation metric characteristic of the government system. The Title VI program in particular seems actually to promote diffusion by its funding procedure, which pits one institution against another with regard to a particular language field. This procedure offers no direct reward for cross-institution collaboration on the concerns of a given language field, and in many ways it discourages such collaboration. Even when efforts are made to coordinate certain activities for a field across institutions, it is a well-known fact that the protection of institutional turf among the relevant centers takes first priority, since monies flow only to institutions, not to language fields.

Fieldwide collective effort is of course contrary to the competitive business interests of the proprietary language system. Where such institutions contract to the government system for training in rarely taught languages, the sharing of instructional resources with the government is a fast way out of business. In addition, such proprietary programs have, to date, not yet arrived at a common evaluation metric for language competency.

The education auxiliary system suffers the same internal diffusion. Many institutions prefer to maintain their own overseas study programs for purposes of instructional control, guaranteeing that the fragmentation of LCTL instruction domestically is simply carried abroad. Rather than working through an institutional consortium that allows more centralized planning, quality control, and the implementation of a fieldwide instructional framework that covers training abroad for all students participating from different institutions, each institution essentially reinvents the wheel as regards overseas programs, from curriculum design to teacher training to materials development to assessment. Rather than building an overseas infrastructure for a given language field, each program goes about struggling with a local infrastructure. Regarding domestic summer intensive language programs in a given language field, it is not uncommon to find several institutions offering instruction in rarely taught languages out of a sense of institutional turf as opposed to pooling resources for such languages at one summer location.

Likewise, where formal instruction does exist for students of ethnic heritage, one finds a burgeoning system in some languages such as Chinese and Korean, where Saturday school programs have little or no collective linkages. Again, each program reinvents the instructional wheel locally, relying on local expertise to develop materials, to design curricula, and to train teachers (when this is done at all).

The development of LCTL capacity is even further complicated by the lack of vertical articulation within some of these systems. The government programs do achieve some such articulation through their reliance on a standardized competency metric, and proprietary programs assisting the government programs are likewise, theoretically at least, held to this same standard. However, vertical articulation is less likely a problem for the proprietary system, since so much instruction is at the lowest level, and the clientele rarely pursues sustained study up the competency ladder. However, the educational system, by virtue of its scope and structure, ranging from elementary school through college, suffers at each institutional juncture from the lack of standardized goals, standardized assessment, and especially an overarching instructional framework aimed at the lifelong learner and learning career. Moreover, individual learners of a given LCTL often shift in and out of these various systems. College-trained language students move into the government system and vice versa, many students shift between the educational system and the auxiliary system, students with ethnic language backgrounds move through all of these systems if they attempt to improve their home-life language skills. Yet the lack of a fieldwide architecture that cuts across these various delivery systems practically ensures a disjointed learning sequence.

The current LCTL architecture with respect to the K–12 sector of the educational system deserves some special discussion. At the highest levels, states constitute a geographical bonding of both public and private schools. With the public sector there is again a hierarchical system of institutional organization ranging from the school to the school district to the state education agencies. Again, however, this institutional organization has not encouraged fieldwide architecture both within and across states as regards the LCTLs. LCTL teachers have for the most part formed informal organizations or working groups, but even such minimal field-related organization is usually totally lacking. The K–12 system in statewide and interstate planning seems to lack critical mechanisms to access existing LCTL expertise, either through mutual contacts or through coherent contact with the tertiary educational system where so much LCTL expertise is housed. There are no structures or planning mechanisms at the level of K–12 for developing fieldwide standards of student language competency across states;[9] rather, a few states are independently developing proficiency standards just for that state, thus representing an enormous duplication of effort from a language field perspective. At the same time there remains no national, field-based effort for ascertaining LCTL teacher qualifications. There are no organized efforts or organizations for developing K–12 instructional materials, for teacher training, or for curriculum design. In brief, there is no realization at the state level or across states of any sort of LCTL fieldwide superstructure, not to speak of any organized effort to build in the infrastructure component required to offer quality instruction in these languages. Without an institutional organization that reflects a given language field, articulation between the various K–12 divisions of elementary, middle, and high schools, and articulation with the tertiary level, remains quite elusive.

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[9] The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, in collaboration with the American Association of Teachers of French, the American Association of Teachers of German, and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, has recently been funded by the United States Education Department to undertake a project establishing national standards for fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students of French, German, and Spanish. Whether this process will be successful, or whether it will apply to the LCTLs, remains to be seen.

4.2. Problematic Development Strategies

The current architecture for LCTL instruction is the result of a set of intentional and de facto policy decisions based on questionable and problematic strategies. Not only did such strategies create the current architecture; they continue to contribute to a largely dysfunctional LCTL capacity system. Several of these past and current development strategies are discussed below as they relate to the proposed national planning process.

4.2.1. Developing and Maintaining the Expertise Base

The national strategic planning process put forward here can be seen as a branching tree with a hierarchical arrangement of nodes or points of leverage. The expertise base is at the top, and the bottom node is the institutional setting that provides the local expertise and the instructional program. Coming down the tree are the provisions for superstructure and infrastructure. Using this metaphor, one can summarize past and present strategies for creating LCTL capacity as essentially attempting to work up the tree from the bottom to the top. In this scheme the creation of superstructure and infrastructure is based on the assumption of a trickle-up from institutions and programs that will eventually lead to more centralized planning, the pooling of resources, and the formation of structures and strategies that will lead to coordination, and the cumulation of a national capacity. This has not happened, and in fact the loading of demands on the lower branches of the tree through direct program and institutional funding and expanded language study clienteles has simply bent the tree over.

The most noticeable victim of past strategies, and the one most central to LCTL instruction, is the expertise base. Since this base is essentially the domain of higher education, even for training many of the experts in the government training programs, one is led back to the intent and realization of the Title VI strategy. What has proved most problematic about the Title VI effort is that it directly linked the development of area studies expertise with language expertise. At first such an arrangement would seem ideal, but in reality the focus on area studies opened the door for a seemingly endless expansion of the area studies side but stagnation for the language side. While the area studies centers were and are provided with funding for language instruction and funding for graduate fellowships, the development of graduate students into the future linguistic and language program experts was left to the marketplace of individual student interest. This is turn left the creation of a language instruction expertise base pipeline to incidental rather than planned growth.

Seemingly as a compensation strategy, the universities focused not on developing such expertise but on hiring native-speaking teachers for their inherent expertise of just being native speakers. The expertise base thus became the native-speaking teachers, with disciplinary expertise in linguistics, SLA, and intercultural communication relying on the presence and interest of individual resident scholars. The situation remains true for today where language programs in Title VI centers are much more likely to have involved in language instruction more faculty in literature than in linguistics and many more students in the former than in the latter.

Moreover, the expansion of area studies to include undergraduate education, European languages, general international studies, and business, and to provide outreach to other sectors of the educational system, has largely been unaccompanied by special efforts to strengthen the language side, and in many cases has siphoned off resources that could have been used for this purpose. Given that so many of these expansions have directly included or at least given lip service to language instruction, this expansion of the area studies side without enrichment of the language side is even more remarkable.

At the same time, the rise of theoretical linguistics has pulled those few potential language instruction specialists who exist into a research mode focused on fragments of language systems such that the more comprehensive linguistic analyses characteristic of the descriptive linguistic tradition are fast disappearing.

When all of the above factors are taken into account, it should not be surprising the LCTL expertise base is now quite shaky. Linguistic descriptions for many languages do not exist, nor do dictionaries and handbooks, which are derived from such descriptions. Likewise, for many languages textbooks are out of date with regard to changes in the target language. The evolving expertise in discourse analysis, ethnolinguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolingusitics, cross-cultural pragmatics, and SLA theory is largely absent in the LCTL expertise base. In fact, for many LCTLs there are no descriptions or instructional materials at all, and this lack of expertise results in poor curricular design, week materials design, few rigorous teacher-training programs, and weak student and program assessment provisions. From the university, the center for research for the LCTLs, these problems radiate out to the other four capacity systems (government, proprietary, auxiliary, and ethnic) and to the other segments of the educational system.

The recent addition to Title VI of the provision for several national foreign language resource centers represents an awareness that the language side of Title VI is in disrepair. However, at the same time, this new initiative must be seen as simply another extension of the problematic traditional strategy of focusing on institutions rather than on language fields. A proactive addition to Title VI in line with the proposed national strategic planning initiative would have worked something like this. First, national needs would be compared with national capacity, leading to the sort of language categorization discussed earlier. This would give guidance on which languages need what resources for which purposes. Having ranked specific languages and language fields, each field would be studied as regards its superstructure and infrastructure needs, leading to the formation of a learning framework, a fieldwide plan, and the necessary organizational structure necessary to work on implementing the plan. The fieldwide organizations would collectivize expertise through projects that would include experts at institutions, but institutions themselves would not receive funds directly—only the language specialists and their projects.

Rather than such a proactive approach to national needs and national capacity, the creation of the new resource centers is almost exclusively reactive. There is no provision for ranking which languages are in need of enhancement nationally; no ranking of the superstructure or infrastructure needs of a given field once selected; no provision for fieldwide collective effort to develop superstructure and infrastructure through specific types of projects; and no provision for assessment that holds funding accountable for fieldwide development, only provision for assessment of particular local projects.[10] Obviously, field development requires such elaborate cross-institutional expertise and projects that allotting modest amounts of funds to three or four institutions cannot begin to tap the required expertise base. In addition, the competing institutions are naturally limited in their proposed projects largely to local expertise—both specific language and linguistic—and to the research strengths of resident faculty with at best modest provisions for consultants. Some collaboration across centers is necessary to avoid duplication and to enhance the new centers as a concept, but too much collaboration might well be seen as a sign of weakness in a given area for one center, thus jeopardizing future refunding.

In short, the case can be made that the combination of area studies and language in Title VI, while of great benefit to the language side initially, now has become somewhat of an obstacle for developing LCTL national capacity, as the strategy of institutional priority with trickle-up for fieldwide development essentially has not proved viable.

4.2.2. Quantity vs. Quality: The Expansion Strategy

Under the present institutionally based architecture, local instructional programs in the LCTLs require enrollments to justify resources. This situation has led to strategies where language fields must vie with one another on the importance of their language for national needs, both to potential students and to potential funding sources. With no national planning for LCTL language needs, including the number and the language functions desired, this market-driven approach often finds itself attempting to provide a capacity for which the market is quite unclear. Yet the fact remains, existing and new programs must have enrollments. At the same time, for some languages there is a national effort, inspired by policymakers at the top and by students, parents, and educational institutions at the bottom, to expand enrollments quite deliberately.

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[10] Even more startling is that there is no planning for the three to four national foreign language resource centers even to work on the languages long a part of Title VI. Thus, no resource center has proposed projects, for example, on African languages, Southeast Asian languages, South Asian languages, Eastern European languages (other than one small initiative in Polish), or Turkish.

In sum, returning to the tree metaphor introduced above, we see that the result of all of these strategies is to put more pressure on the lowest nodes: institutions and their programs. However, success in loading up the lower nodes without attention to rest of the tree simply puts further strain on the superstructure and infrastructure of each affected language field. As a result of the expansion of enrollments, the bottom nodes are strained further by the addition of desperately sought but largely untrained teachers, thus pulling down the field even more. Funding students directly through fellowships to study the language is yet another bottom-node strategy that puts even greater strain on the program. The expansion of enrollments and even of languages is not proceeding by firming up the upper nodes where planning, the development of expertise, and the mechanisms for transferring this expertise figure critically. In short, having expansion at the bottom without enhancement higher up is courting disaster. The LCTLs are difficult to learn, given the best of programs, and attrition rates run high even in quality programs. Thus, the question arises as to whether long-term capacity in these languages is actually best served by a focus on quantity over quality, or whether in the long run quality—through policy and planning—should come first.

4.2.3. Innovation, Experimentation, and Model Program Strategies

The entry of the LCTLs into segments of the educational system has obviously suggested an interesting correlation to many funders and educators: languages new to the traditional system require new approaches. Often, one innovation proceeds as though for a given field there were no infrastructure components or superstructure components in place at all, no accumulated experience, no fifty years of LCTL instructional history. The notion of new and innovative instructional approaches has become rather hopelessly confused with the different, not new, approaches of LCTL instruction as contrasted with instruction in the mainstream cognate European languages.

Funding and educational initiatives involving innovation and model programs seem to be geared to an experiment where one bottom node of the LCTL architecture tries to arrive at expertise that might be picked up by another bottom node. Node-hopping across the lowest level is somehow seen as preferable to working back up the tree to access expertise and, more important, to strengthen this expertise through the enhancement of fieldwide superstructure and infrastructure. New programs at the K–12 and undergraduate levels are encouraged to reinvent a half-century-old wheel and then share their fruits with other programs. Each program must struggle on its own with materials development for these languages, with how to train teachers, with how to define teacher qualifications, with how to design curricula, with how to derive goals and provide accountability through assessment that these goals are being met.

4.2.4. The Imported Teacher Strategy

To offset the shortage of teachers in the currently more demanded LCTLs, a new strategy of teacher importation has evolved, especially for K–12 LCTL programs. This strategy proves problematic for a number of reasons. First, in some cases there are attempts simply to hire educated native speakers from abroad who have no language instruction experience at all. Even when such experience is required, however, there is little thought as to whether these imported teachers can survive in the American educational system, which differs radically from those of China, Japan, and the Middle East. Moreover, there is a failure to appreciate that learning language is the goal, not teaching it, and that this requires a knowledge of the learners' problems in mastering the language. Imported teachers who have not worked with American students may be totally unprepared to offer instruction designed for the foreign learner.

Again, such a strategy can be seen as a shortcut to developing teaching capacity. Instead of strengthening a field's superstructure and infrastructure, expertise is imported directly to the lowest node of the instructional system. The definition of expertise followed by this strategy is problematic, however, represents more of the lowest-node experimentation, and most probably will lead to the need for training these imported teachers. However, such training is generally not available even for resident LCTL teachers, and the training demands for these imported teachers simply strain a field's superstructure and infrastructure even more.

4.2.5. Current Funding Strategies

Examples of the development strategies discussed here are ever-present in current federal funding programs for the Group 1 LCTLs—Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and in some cases Korean. FIPSE, FIRST, some programs within NEH, Star Schools, and the Foreign Language Assistance Act are all aimed at the expansion of programs and enrollments at the lowest nodes of the LCTL system, with little or no funds targeted for the superstructure and infrastructure of these language fields. FIPSE funding emphasizes innovation and model programs, not building on existing experience and expertise further upstream, perhaps in the mistaken belief that the upper levels are being addressed by Title VI. FIRST has shown some interest in model programs at the K–12 level. Some NEH monies are wisely directed at teacher training, but with emphasis on authentic texts and high cultural traditions, in contrast with the need for pedagogical training, for the ability to read simple materials—perhaps for years before attempting literary texts—and for the anthropological culture necessary for intercultural communication with members of noncognate cultures. The Star School program, in its language component, encourages distance learning of quite difficult languages that have enormous problems bringing students to minimal levels of competence with a much richer resource base of live teachers and classrooms.

To focus on just one example, the Foreign Language Assistance Act is intended to promote model foreign language programs at the K–12 level. Essentially, it puts a premium on innovative model programs such that existing programs, with some cumulation of experience, can be excluded on the grounds that *innovative programs* means new, not old, programs. Moreover, the act suffers exactly the problems of Title VI: direct funding to institutions where merit is determined by local capability rather than a field-based proactive strategy recognizing the value of collective collaboration. The act could have required applicants for these state-based programs in a given language to work together in mounting programs, could have placed competition value on knowledge about the language field, its experience, and its expertise base, could have required formal linkage to institutions of higher learning where the expertise exists, could have required applicants to network with existing K–12 programs, some of which have been in existence for many years, and so forth. Yet such conditions would have been quite unfair, given that there was no prior funding to establish a K–12 network for a given LCTL language field, to set up fieldwide organizations at the K–12 level for these language fields, to establish linkages with existing expertise at the tertiary level, to formulate statewide collaborative plans, and the like. Rather, the act starts and stops at the lowest node: the local program.

Given the state of affairs described in this paper, the question arises as to the most effective way to redirect many of the federal, state, and private efforts toward a concerted focus on field architecture. In this regard, certain steps have been taken. Specifically, in 1991, after several years of preparatory meetings, the NCOLCTL was founded, with National Foreign Language Center support and funding from the Ford Foundation. The explicit goal of the new organization was to strengthen the superstructure of the individual LCTL fields individually and the LCTL profession as a whole. Specifically, the organization is working at (1) founding new or strengthening existing LCTL organizations; (2) developing a generic "language learning framework," the basic characteristics of which would serve as a model for the creation of language-specific learning frameworks; (3) developing language-specific learning frameworks to guide program and curriculum development, teacher training, materials design and production, and so on; (4) creating an active network of individual language fields and all LCTLs in general; and (5) providing the national LCTL voice in the professional and political dialogues concerning substantive as well as policy issues. Finally, the NCOLCTL is preparing a national conference to bring the leadership of the LCTLs in the United States together with representatives of those constituencies concerned with national capacity in these languages, be they from business, government and military agencies, educational institutions and associations, or the ethnic language support community. The topic of the proposed conference is strategic planning at the national level for the LCTLs.

With theses and other initiatives, the LCTLs in the United States have begun to organize to address their field needs. Such work assumes a concerted planning process with a concrete specification of the issues involved. The present paper is intended as a contribution to exploring the dimensions of the task.

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SECTION III

TEACHER EDUCATION

TEACHER EDUCATION AND NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE POLICIES

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The role played by teacher education in national foreign language policies is closely related to the specific structure of the national educational system, with respect both to the system as a whole and to the organization of teacher education as one of its parts. So I shall discuss this matter in the framework of the Dutch national educational system, and to a large extent it will be up to the reader to decide how far my conclusions and observations might have a more general validity.

If an administration considers the foreign language proficiency of its population to be an important issue, it has legislative means to pursue this objective. It can, for example, make foreign language instruction compulsory in its school curricula. In addition, it can provide extra language-learning opportunities in the curricular guidelines and stimulate their use. In the Dutch situation both measures have been undertaken on a relatively large scale. The Dutch educational system is schematically represented in figure 1.

In the "havo" and "vwo" branches of the secondary level, the first three years are approximately equivalent to the "mavo," and these three together form the general lower secondary level. The last two years (in the "havo" branch) or three (in the pre-university "vwo" branch) form the upper secondary level. Roughly speaking, language teaching takes place at three levels. English is compulsory for all Dutch children in the last two years of primary education and in the vocational branch of the lower secondary level (approximately 30 percent). In this branch 15 percent of the students also follow German courses. English, French, and German are taught in the general branch ("mavo," "havo," and "vwo") of the lower secondary level. For qualification for the upper secondary level, three languages are compulsory. At this upper secondary level one language is compulsory, 45.0 percent take two, and 17.5 percent take three languages.[1]

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[1] Figure 1 represents the present situation. Within a few years the whole lower secondary level will be combined into one comprehensive period lasting three years, comparable to the German orientation stage. In this period two languages are compulsory: English and French or German. The third language is optional but is required for admittance to the upper secondary level. At present a bill is under discussion to make two foreign languages compulsory for the upper secondary level;

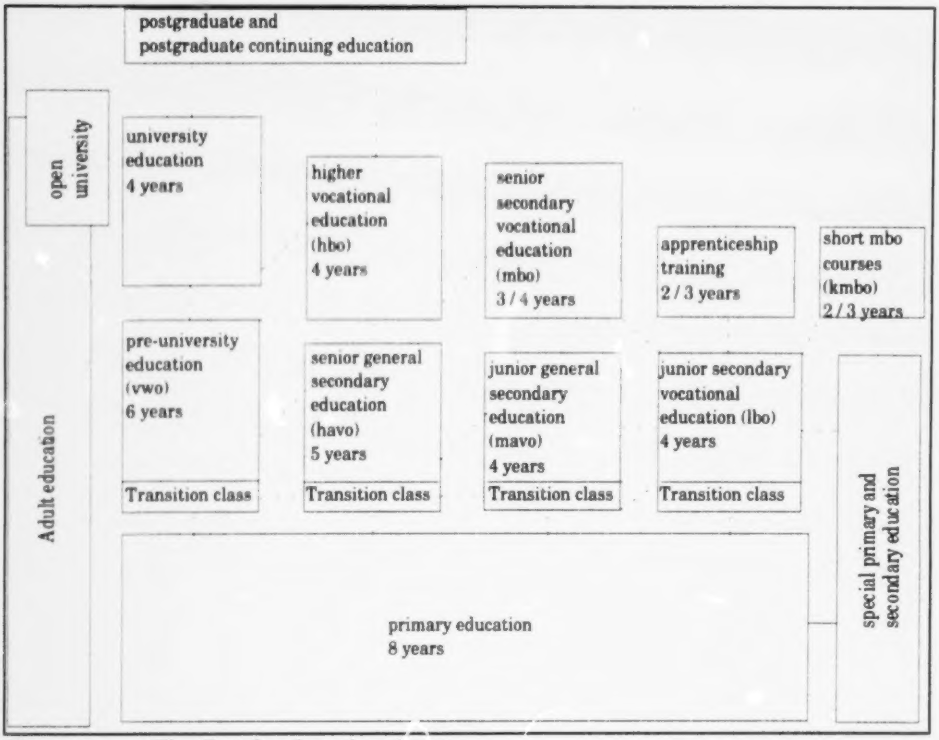
postgraduate and
postgraduate continuing education
open university
university education
4 years
higher vocational education (hbo)
4 years
senior secondary vocational education (mbo)
3 / 4 years
apprenticeship training
2 / 3 years
short mbo courses (kmbo)
2 / 3 years
pre-university education (vwo)
6 years
senior general secondary education (havo)
5 years
junior general secondary education (mavo)
4 years
junior secondary vocational education (lbo)
4 years
Transition class
Transition class
Transition class
Transition class
Adult education
special primary and secondary education
primary education
8 years

Figure 1. **The Dutch educational system.**

2. TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE QUALITY OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

2.1. The Importance of Vocational Training

To achieve the desired proficiency, it is not enough simply to say, "Let there be language teaching." In order to be effective, the quality of this teaching—not just the teacher's knowledge of the subject matter—needs to be good. Teacher education plays a crucial role here. For example, a committee of the Dutch Language Union (Taakgroep forthcoming) has criticized the teaching abilities of university graduates as compared with primary school teachers, attributing their poor teaching capacities to a lack of practical training and of education in methodology, pedagogy, and curriculum theory. Those teachers in particular who received their education at a university seem to think that teaching means standing up in front of a group and explaining something difficult. Ask academically trained language teachers to teach swimming, and they will form classes and explain Archimedes' law and elementary

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presumably this bill will become law in the near future.

mechanics, their motto being, "The best way to acquire a skill is to understand how it works."

To avoid this, the education of a teacher should also consist of a vocational part in which teaching as a professional activity is taken very seriously. How to organize effective learning activities should be a substantial part of that training. In the case of language teaching in the Netherlands, the quality of the vocational preparation varies considerably, depending on the level for which the teachers are qualified.

2.2. Preparation for Primary Education

Since foreign languages are relatively new as an official subject in primary education, teachers at the primary level have received no preparatory education in foreign language pedagogy at all. Primary school teachers are trained at colleges of higher vocational education. The courses in these institutes enable them to teach every subject taught in primary education, except foreign languages. When, in August 1985, English became compulsory in primary education, large-scale in-service training for teachers was carried out. It does not seem to have been very successful. The training was of very short duration, and only some of the teachers participated. This lack of vocational preparation is reflected in the results: evaluation studies are not very positive. Edelenbos and Koster (1990) did not find significant improvement of learning outcomes at the secondary level. Secondary school teachers often say that they notice no difference from the situation before 1985, or they complain that they need even more effort to eradicate stubborn mistakes caused by previous bad teaching.

2.3. Preparation for the Lower Levels of Secondary Education

Vocational preparation for the secondary levels is described in its historical development by Wubbels (1991). Until 1970 the situation at the secondary level was hardly better than that at the primary level. The emphasis in teacher-education programs was on subject matter. Vocational preparation was marginal. Since 1970, however, the situation has improved considerably. At present each secondary level has its own route to the teaching profession, both having a strong vocational component. For the lower secondary level, teachers are educated at special teacher-training colleges with the status of polytechnic. The first colleges of this type started in 1970. The curriculum consists of courses in one subject (three years in all) and at least one year of pedagogy, teaching methods, and practical training. To enroll, a certificate of upper-level secondary education is required. Quite revolutionary for the Netherlands was the integration of the subject into the vocational courses in one curriculum lasting four years. These vocational courses are partly theoretical, partly practice-oriented. They also involve micro teaching and, very important, carefully sequenced in-school student teaching.

2.4. Preparation for the Upper Levels of Secondary Education

Teachers for the upper secondary level are educated at universities or equivalent institutions. Here also the situation has changed drastically since the early 1970s. In the early days teacher education involved subject matter only. From 1952 until the early 1970s, obtaining a teaching certificate required attending courses in pedagogy, teaching methods, and the psychology of adolescence, but these components still played a marginal role. In addition, students were required to observe forty to eighty lessons in schools. These courses and the teachers who gave them had relatively low status among university students and staff. In the 1970s these courses and the observation practice were gradually replaced by a curriculum in which theoretical preparation, practical training on campus, and student teaching in schools were integrated into a coherent curriculum. At present, in order to qualify as a teacher for the upper secondary level, a one-year full-time postgraduate teacher-training course is required, after a master's degree program in subject matter including a two-month course, "Orientation on educational practice."

About 40 percent of the one-year postgraduate course takes the form of supervised student teaching in the school. The student teacher is also counseled by a teacher who works in the school in which the student teaching takes place and who has had special training in counseling student teachers. He or she works closely with the responsible university staff member and is also a member of the examination committee. Counseling student teachers is an official function, and the responsible teachers are remunerated for this work in the form of a four-hour reduction of their weekly teaching load.

This postgraduate course includes a three-hundred-hour practice-oriented research component. On campus, students are trained in research methods that can be used in the school practice. They are supposed to apply these methods in a small-scale project. These projects can take the form of helping a school to solve a practical problem by means of scientific methods; participating in an ongoing larger research and development project in the university department of teacher education; or conducting a critical analysis of literature in the field of educational science as to its possible contribution to the solution of practical problems.

3. METHODOLOGY OF TEACHER EDUCATION

3.1. The Problem of Transfer from Theory to Practice

What was said about teaching as a profession is also true for the teaching of teachers: like all teaching, teacher education itself should be organized on the basis of a sound methodology. The problem is that the study of this methodology is even younger than the pedagogy of foreign languages, and the experiences with systematically planned teacher training are only relatively recent and have hardly been studied scientifically. Yet some insights are emerging that might help explain the somewhat disappointing impact of present teacher education on the actual teaching behavior of trainees once they start their work as teachers. These insights might also help us find ways of improving the effectiveness of teacher training.

One of these insights is formulated in terms of poor transfer from on-campus theory to classroom teaching practice (see e.g. Zeichner 1986). There are several explanations for this phenomenon. One explanation considers the problem from the viewpoint of so-called constructivism. Another explanation is based on a cognitive psychological perspective. The constructivist view is promising and very interesting (see e.g. Magoon 1977). Nevertheless, I will restrict myself to a very short and superficial description, because organizing teacher education according to these insights does not have substantial implications for a national language policy.

From the constructivist point of view, humans are seen as subjects who actively construct comprehension from experiences using existing mental "frameworks." These frameworks consist of knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs deeply rooted in experience. They may often be internally inconsistent, but in that case also they are self-evident resources for action. As such, they act as strong schemata for interpreting things that happen in the classroom. Constructivism interprets poor transfer from theory to practice as a lack of integration of the theories presented in teacher education with the preexisting and possibly conflicting schemata of the student teacher. According to this theory, the necessary integration can be organized either by a gradual process of change in which connections are made between existing and new conceptions, or by a systematically organized radical restructuring of the student teacher's existing conceptions under carefully sequenced conditions. (For further details, see Wubbels 1992b, which also gives more details on methodological implications.)

According to the cognitive psychological view, the presentation of theory without direct connections and associations with the situation in which it will have to be applied will result in so-called compartmentalization in memory (e.g. Van Parreren 1972; Gagné and White 1978). As a result, the theory will not be easily accessible in the situation in which it has to be applied. According to this viewpoint, theory can be made more accessible for application if there are as many connections and associations as possible between the application situation and the situation in which the theory is taught. In this way the theory will be stored in memory, together with evocators from the application situation that will help activate the stored knowledge when application is functional. These connections can be made in the form of similarities between—and, where possible, simultaneity of—both situations. In concrete terms this means that in teacher education, theory should be presented as much as possible in the context of the school practice where it is supposed to be of help.

In order to realize this, intensive cooperation between university staff members and school teaching counselors (STCs) is paramount. STCs are the intermediaries between the two systems. Koetsier et al. (1991) describe in more detail the role of STCs and the factors that help or hinder their effectiveness. In this context I will restrict myself to the conclusion that transfer will have a chance only if STCs are not only skilled teachers but also know exactly what theory the student teachers have been exposed to at the university. In the ideal situation they should have participated in the development of the university curriculum in order to make sure that the theory taught and the practice to which it has to be applied have as much overlap as possible. For the STC this not only implies cooperation; it also requires training in counseling skills as well as in foreign language pedagogy, which in turn will contribute to the STC's professional proficiency, which again, as a by-product of teacher education, will contribute to the improvement of foreign language teaching in his or her school.

As was said before, in the Netherlands this situation more or less exists only in the case of university teaching education. Policymakers tend to underestimate the role of the STC, especially because there are financial consequences to acknowledging that role. In the Netherlands remuneration in the form of a reduction of the regular teaching load was abolished for STCs who cooperated with the polytechnic teacher-training colleges. Brouwer (1989) investigated the effects of this abolishment on the training of student teachers and reported a diminished effectiveness. A second effect of the abolishment of remuneration has been that most STCs are no longer willing to follow special training courses, which again will presumably have a negative effect on the improvement of foreign language teaching.

3.2. The Sequencing of Vocational Education and Its Relevance for Policymaking

The fact remains that teachers very often seem to be reluctant to accept—if not downright opposed to, let alone eager to adopt or promote—educational change or innovative developments. This may have to do in part with the nature of the process of learning how to teach, and more specifically with the stage of professional development at which this process is normally organized. There is some evidence that in ordinary preservice teacher education, this process occurs at a moment when it is not very effective, maybe even counterproductive to creating an open mind toward innovation.

Wubbels (1992a) analyzes the process of learning to teach and concludes that learning by experience seems to be an important component of this process. According to Bandura (1969), in this type of learning, internal and external reinforcement are powerful factors in determining what is learned and what is not. Internal reinforcement is provided in the form of the responses of the participants in the situation. In the case of student teachers, these participants are the learners they are working with. External reinforcement comes from other (important) persons—within teacher education, almost always the teacher trainer. Wubbels points out that when student teachers are practicing teaching behavior, they are much more exposed to internal than to external reinforcement. This reinforcement will mostly be given in the form of learner behavior perceived by the student teacher as "normal" (listening attentively, no disciplinary disturbances, and the like). Learners, however, tend to behave more "normally" to the extent that the teacher's behavior is in accordance with their expectations—that is, traditional. Thus, one of the most powerful factors in the teacher's own learning process favors the learning of traditional teaching behavior in the first place. This means that the learning of new, more sophisticated teaching behavior has a better chance when teachers have developed their leadership capacities to such an extent that they can afford unusual situations, without running the risk of disturbances they can't cope with.

Other research findings confirm that "keeping the class quiet" is the main concern of student and beginning teachers (Creton and Wubbels 1984). Consequently, they have a strong preference for centrally directed, plenary teaching procedures and tend to dislike or even fear instructional settings with a large amount of learner participation. Such settings make them feel very insecure. This is particularly unfavorable in foreign language teaching. Teaching a language in plenary sessions with much teacher activity and relatively little learner participation is as effective as teaching a group of fifty people to drive a bus with the teacher sitting at the wheel. Yet it has proven difficult to make it attractive to student teachers and teachers with little experience to learn more useful teaching procedures (see also Westhoff 1989).

Various research findings suggest that in the career of a teacher a certain sequencing can be distinguished with respect to the type of things he or she is interested in. In the first stage, student and beginning teachers are almost totally preoccupied with survival. In the second stage, the search for good teaching methods is in the foreground, and not before the third period do teachers start to look for ways to elicit and facilitate learning by organizing learning activities. (For a review of research on this topic, see Kremer-Hayon 1991.)

Wubbels (1992a) finally points out that as long as there is no obligation for further vocational education during the rest of a teacher's career, teacher educators tend to cram into preservice education everything they think the trainee will need during the whole of his or her life. This means not only that there is much in the initial education that does not agree with the students' main concerns at that stage of their development, but also that there is often too much to be learned properly.

All this leads to the conclusion that teacher education probably can be made (much) more effective by splitting it up into, say, three recurrent educational periods, to be attended at intervals, at times roughly parallel to the development of a teacher's needs and interests. In terms of curricular outlines, this could be conceived in the form of a shorter vocational preservice training, focusing mainly on preventing and coping with disciplinary problems, leading to the qualification of assistant teacher. The first two years in-service should be embedded in an in-service training course on a, say, 50/50 basis—that is, a teaching load of maximally twelve supervised hours a week, alternating with courses focusing on elementary methodology and pedagogy, leading to the qualification of junior teacher. After a few years' experience, a junior teacher could try to qualify as a senior by following an in-service training course of two years (workload one day a week) focusing on more sophisticated methodology and elementary research and development skills. Additionally, there should be the possibility to specialize in optional fields such as curriculum development, orthodidactics, management, guidance and counseling, and the like.

Authorities could facilitate such a form of recurrent teacher education considerably, not only by creating the legislative, institutional, and financial conditions, but also by making the successful completion of these in-service parts of advanced teacher education a precondition for higher positions in the school and an increase of salary. This again implies a policy toward a more extended—and probably more hierarchical—differentiation of functions in the school organization than is normal in most countries at present. In this respect the teachers unions pose a special problem. In the Netherlands, at least, the unions appear to be reluctant to accept that an increase in salary would no longer be more or less automatic, but would be dependent on recurrent qualification through in-service training.

3.3. Innovative Implementational Research Projects as a Form of In-Service Training

One form this in-service training could take is participation in implementational innovation projects. As projects in Sweden and Finland show (Biddle and Malmberg 1993, pp. 5–49), this can be an interesting tool of foreign language policy. First, it seems to offer a very realistic learning setting for the teachers involved. It provides them with the sort of learning experiences that fit very well into the constructivist learning principles discussed above. Second, it creates the opportunity for policymakers to profit from the experience of classroom teachers—for example, in materials development. Third, if teachers at this stage of their professional development were given a real stake in the responsibility for the project, two things could be realized simultaneously. On the one hand, it would force them to monitor and evaluate their activity and its effects more seriously than would have been necessary for them in a role as mere intermediaries. At the same time, the information they gathered from their experiences and their reflections on those experiences could be channeled back to policymakers and could serve as an important source of feedback on aims, objectives, and, most of all, the way implementation can be optimized.

One of the problems of implementing and disseminating educational change is the one-sided, top-down character of the process. Substantial participation of teachers, possibly in cooperation with grass-roots organizations, in implementational, innovative research projects might be not only an effective form of in-service training, but also a way of organizing and stimulating the bottom-up side of the process.

4. THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

There are many good reasons advocating the involvement of universities in teacher education. It is not only, for example, that for the upper secondary level the subject knowledge of a teacher has to meet high standards. There are also good arguments for situating the vocational part of the training within a university setting.

We know that foreign languages can be taught much more effectively than is done at present. But for the improvement of foreign language instruction, we still know too little about the underlying processes and about external factors determining the effectiveness of instructional settings. Furthermore, too little is known about what determines teacher behavior and what sort of interventions contribute to changes in that behavior. Extensive research is needed in all these areas, and in most countries the universities are preeminently the places for that research to be conducted, on the basis of their equipment, experience, know-how, and attitude. One might argue that this in itself does not necessarily mean that teacher education also has to take place at universities. The training could be located somewhere else, and the universities could do the research anyway.

In my opinion this is not true. First, it is only at departments of teacher education that this sort of practice-oriented research is done in its own right and not as an applied something. Only there is it initiated for its own sake and not as a by-product of other research that is perceived as more fundamental.

Second, only in teacher education is there constant pressure to be aware of and to show the relationship between the research done and the reality that research tries to improve. In my opinion one explanation for the little impact of results in the field of applied linguistics on school practice is that teachers only seldom recognize their problems in the research questions that are investigated, nor do they see a relationship between their own reality and the outcomes of such research. Furthermore, even if the research is practice-oriented and relevant for the improvement of foreign language instruction, teachers are needed who are able to read, assess, and implement the outcomes of that research—an ability that is normally acquired through university training.

There is still another reason to be found in the literature on the "teacher-as-researcher" movement (e.g. Stenhouse 1975; Nias and Groundwater-Smith 1988; Lawn 1989; Elliott 1991). In this literature it is argued that research in research institutions can only partly solve the problems of educational practice. It is assumed that teachers themselves should be able to make a contribution to progress and development within education. Klem et al. (1989) point out that the idea that teachers can and should carry out research is not new. About sixty years ago in the United States, a great deal of research took place in the schools themselves, and during the 1950s close attention was paid to what was then called "action research" (e.g. Shumsky 1958). According to Klem et al. this could take the form of research and development and could imply an "inquiry-oriented" approach (see also Zeichner 1983). In this context research means that teachers consider their complex tasks from an inquiry-oriented point of view, and thus are able to cope with practical problems in a scientific—that is, systematic and verifiable—way. To be able to do so presupposes an investigational attitude and elementary research skills especially in the field of educational (that is, social) science.

All this points to the desirability of having at least some teachers educated at a university where acquiring elementary research skills and the corresponding attitude are an integral and important part of the curriculum. However, the integration of this aspect in the curriculum is not as easy as it might seem and requires its own methodology. Experiments in this field have been carried out in the Netherlands and reported on by, among others, Klem et al. (1989) and Ten Brinke (1991).

5. QUALITY MONITORING BY SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PEER REVIEW

In the Netherlands the right to issue teaching qualifications is established by law. The law gives very global curricular guidelines in terms of subjects and course duration. Institutions mentioned in the law are more or less automatically accredited. During the 1980s, however, under the influence of the emerging "value for money" philosophy and the ensuing emphasis on accountability, there was a growing interest on the part of the government in quality monitoring. For that purpose a quality assessment procedure has been developed by universities and institutions of higher vocational education. As Goedegebuure et al. (1990b) point out, on the government side the need for this assessment was primarily efficiency-driven, with interest mainly focused on the efficiency of the system as a whole.

This approach, combined with the constitutional and almost holy autonomy of educational authorities in the Netherlands, resulted in the development of a procedure in which the emphasis is more on methods of peer review than, as in the United Kingdom, on performance indicators. The term *peers* is defined in a broad sense and includes not just scientists but also representatives of the "customer" side such as headmasters, officials from the Ministry of Education, independent experts from other interest groups, and the like. Paardekooper and Spee (1990), two high officials of the Dutch Ministry of Education, describe the role of the government in this procedure as "above all to monitor whether evaluation is taking place, how this is being done and what use is being made of the results." In their opinion, "It is essential for these purposes that the assessment be based on empirical data, on relevant, reliable and valid information" (p. 50).

The whole project is set up and coordinated by the Association of Cooperating Dutch Universities. The government's role is implemented in supervision by the Inspectorate of Higher Education (for a description of the inspectorate's task, see Bresters and Kalkwijk 1990). The relevant data are collected in two ways. The institutions themselves write a self-assessment study, and quality is assessed by review committees composed of peers (in the broad sense of the word) that actually visit the institutions. Despite pressure from student unions, students are not represented in these committees. As Paardekooper and Spee articulate the government's view, "The participation of students in such committees will not enhance their authority." However, "students should certainly be consulted more ... and should also be given more opportunity to vote with their feet" (p. 55).

The visiting committee's assessment is supposed to concentrate on methodological issues, such as curricula, educational objectives, supervision, and so on. The committee also has to comment on the standards of the assessed institutions. If the committee produces a negative report, it is up to the governing board of the institution to strengthen a particular faculty to raise standards, or to close the faculty if there is no prospect of improvement. The institutions have to report back to the government on how they have responded to the results of the review.

Since 1989 institutions of higher education have the legal obligation to carry out a self-assessment study, which must be published. This study must be repeated at regular intervals, it must be transparent in the sense that the criteria used and procedures followed are clear, and it must contain some kind of follow-up (i.e. the institution has to clarify how it will respond to the results). The Association of Cooperating Dutch Universities has developed an extensive checklist for these studies (cf. Vroeijenstijn and Acherman 1990), with seventy-four items divided into six categories, such as the place in the organization, data about students, description of programs, the educational process, program organization and management, and data about graduates and their occupations. The information from these studies serves as the visiting committee's guideline for conducting the interviews in the faculty. The committee has to discuss the facts and verify them.

By now most institutions of teacher education have been visited for the first time, but only some of the reports have been published. So at this moment not very much can be said about the effectiveness of this kind of quality monitoring. But the first impressions are promising. According to Vroeijenstijn and Acherman (1990), "The quality of the reports is not always the same, because it is a new experience for most faculties. But in general they have proved to be very useful and have already shown an effect on the internal quality management" (p. 89).

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE POLICY, PEDAGOGY, AND PRACTICE: AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

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1. THE MANY VOICES OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY

The formulation of language policy in the United States, as Richard Lambert so aptly points out in his paper for this conference, "tends to be dispersed through various levels of the educational system and to address one issue at a time." Without the sort of central planning agency that is common in countries throughout the world, and given the time-honored American tradition of "local control of the schools," the diversity of policy players in American education is astonishing: national and state legislatures, local and state boards of education, professional organizations, government agencies, universities, university schools of education, and practitioners themselves, to name only a few.

In recent years, however, the addition of several new groups of influential policymakers has changed the balance of power in policy and planning issues. Business leaders and coalitions of groups outside the field of education have become part of this already diverse list of players. In addition, politicians, from the president to governors to state legislators, have become more actively involved in discussing, encouraging, and mandating educational reform. As Kaplan and Usdan (1992) state, "What used to be a closed, educator-dominated system of school politics is becoming a high-stakes free-for-all with a cast of new actors notably politicians and business people in the thick of action" (p. 666). The appearance of these "new actors" is largely due to the public's dissatisfaction with the present educational system in the United States, and to the widespread perception that educational "insiders" are unable or unwilling to effect reform. The purpose of this paper is to give a brief overview of trends and issues in American education, and to show how these areas relate to policy issues in foreign languages in general and to teacher recruitment, teacher certification, and teacher education in particular.

2. THE WIDENING GAP

Policy and planning are also thwarted by the estrangement between high-level policymakers and the practitioners who must ultimately implement the changes inherent in policy decisions. Policymakers are frustrated by classroom teachers who are particularly reluctant to modify outmoded and ineffective teaching methods. Teachers, on the other hand, resent top-down approaches to policymaking, which exclude them from the decision-making process. They also mistrust policies generated by individuals far removed from the classroom and the day-to-day, moment-to-moment realities of the practitioner. This widening gap between policymakers and practitioners is also reflected in two contradictory movements in current educational practice in the United States.

The first trend emphasizes a more centralized system of education, similar to that in other countries around the world. Proponents call for standardization, at the national level, of curricula and testing. Advocates of this more centralized system believe that a national curriculum provides the best way to ensure quality control, to standardize teaching practices, and to increase student and teacher accountability.

The second movement, school restructuring, encourages schools to consider radical changes in their organization and administrative patterns. Proponents of restructuring, often referred to as site-based management (David 1991), favor decentralized approaches to education and stress the importance of giving local schools greater control over fiscal, staff, and curricular matters. In school restructuring, teachers are viewed as decision makers capable of making judgments about all aspects of their professional lives. Another key feature of school restructuring is the ability of local school systems to bypass or waive certain state mandates and policies—for example, curricular requirements and teacher certification—in order to meet the needs and goals of their particular situation. Sizer (1984) and his Coalition of Essential Schools have been particularly influential in the school-restructuring movement.

Kentucky and Indiana offer two good examples of how restructuring has influenced schools. The systematic, systemic change that is part of restructuring movements is evident in Kentucky's statewide revamping of its school system. Kentucky schools are given considerable autonomy and flexibility at the local level, where each school is required "to form a council responsible for employment of school staff (including the principal), curriculum design, use of technology, assignment of staff time, scheduling of the school day and week and use of space" (David 1991, p. 13). Indiana has passed legislation called Indiana 2000, a restructuring movement whose major goal is the creation of "new learning environments which are fundamentally different from those that previously existed" (Indiana Department of Education 1992, p. 2).

At the current time it is difficult to define precisely what form(s) restructuring actually takes in the field and to assess how widespread the restructuring movement is. Even without considering the role and influence of restructuring, the diversity of American education at the state level is striking: each of the fifty states has its own set of policies, mandates, legislation, testing, and curricular requirements that guide the educational process in that particular state. If the trend toward restructuring, local control, and empowerment of teachers spreads, the diverse policies and practice that already exist in American education will increase substantially and will make policymaking at the national level even more cumbersome.

The factors influencing general education have also affected foreign language education, where policies tend to be implicit, derivational, and reactive. Where policies exist and can be identified, they have generally emerged as reactions to external exigencies such as allocation of resources, political demands, and economic crises. For example, each time a new federal funding program is announced, language educators eagerly submit proposals to obtain the available funding. Although a large number of these plans are part of a coherent plan developed by a particular institution, they do not conform to policies developed by the profession or to long-term strategies designed to solve problems in an organized and systematic fashion. Financial crises have also found language educators in a reactive position, unable to present policies or plans that would convince educators of the value of the foreign language enterprise. Foreign language educators are similarly unprepared for the major curricular reforms called for by school restructuring and have thus been largely bypassed in these efforts to reconfigure American education.

Further, the foreign language profession is influenced by the factors outlined in this section: the influence of outside forces such as politicians and business leaders; the estrangement between high-level policymakers and practitioners; the paradox of national curricular efforts and local and state control; and finally, the diversity of policies, curricula, and testing at the local and state levels. In no case, however, can one identify what Lambert in his paper calls the "collective policies that might better serve our national priorities."

For better or worse, these influences can be seen in all areas of foreign language education but are particularly noteworthy in the areas to be discussed in this paper: teacher recruitment, teacher certification, and teacher education.

3. ATTRACTING TEACHERS TO THE FIELD: RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND PRACTICE

In recent years the recruitment of teachers into the field has become an important issue that has pedagogical, philosophical, and political implications. Recruiting teachers through traditional gateways—for example, undergraduate liberal arts programs with a teacher-education component provided generally by schools of education—has not been sufficient to meet the need for teachers in the 1990s. For example, more than forty states report shortages in fields such as math, science, foreign language, bilingual education, and special education (Wise and Darling-Hammond 1991). Research by Draper (1989) projects teacher shortages in more than thirty states. In response to these shortages, nontraditional gateways have been created to increase access to the teaching profession and to recruit from populations heretofore untapped. Programs such as "Teach for America" (1992) recruit liberal arts graduates and provide them with an eight-week training program; the Peace Corps Fellows program, in cooperation with New York City's Board of Education and Columbia University, encourages returning Peace Corps volunteers to teach in inner-city New York schools. Tedick et al. (1993) report on the establishment of the New

American Schools Development Corporation, a joint government–private business venture designed to create innovative school environments.

Recruitment of minorities into the teaching profession has also become an important issue in education at large and in foreign languages. At the present time much of the effort to recruit minorities occurs at the institutional level and does not reflect a cohesive plan of action. Hancock (reported in Knop 1991) has called for a concentrated effort to recruit minorities into foreign language study, and subsequently into the foreign language teaching profession.

Although teacher shortages exist for all languages, the need for teacher recruitment is particularly acute in the noncognate languages, where the educational infrastructure is not prepared to meet these needs in a coherent and sound manner—either in the short or the long term (Walton 1992). In order to meet immediate needs for elementary and secondary teachers in the less commonly taught languages, particularly Chinese and Japanese, a variety of recruiting devices are used.

Some elementary and secondary teachers of less commonly taught languages are recruited from abroad or through teacher-certification programs. A more likely scenario consists of the raiding of graduate students from university language and linguistics departments, or the identification of available educated native speakers in the area. Walton (1992) rightly cautions professionals to distinguish between short-term programs for temporary staffing and long-term strategies designed to "create an educational and administrative infrastructure that actually integrates the TFLs into the mainstream" (p. 13).

Distance learning, a term used to describe a variety of language-learning programs delivered via satellite television, has also been used as yet another way to solve teacher shortages, especially in rural or sparsely populated areas: recruitment, in this case, becomes a moot issue because satellite programs obviate the need for teachers in individual schools. Although Lambert (1991) views distance foreign language learning as an opportunity to enhance and expand our instruction in non–Western European languages, he points out that its marginal nature and its inability to offer extended sequences are serious limitations. Warriner-Burke (1990) decries the general lack of input of foreign language specialists into the development of distance-learning programs and chides foreign language educators for allowing "administrators, technologists and a few foreign language instructors to advance a technology whose effectiveness has not been measured and whose appropriateness for the job we have to do has not been verified" (p. 132). Although this fear is rarely stated publicly, many teachers of commonly taught languages fear the misuse of satellite programming by budget-conscious administrators who will use distance-learning programs as an excuse for not hiring qualified foreign language teachers. Thus, viewed from one perspective, distance learning is a possible solution to teacher shortages; on the negative side, distance learning is often perceived as an excuse not to recruit and train language teachers, and most programs have not gone through rigorous program evaluations.

At the college and university level, recruitment issues—except those related to minority recruitment—are not a major concern of departments in the commonly taught languages. However, in light of the increasing number of postsecondary language programs in the less commonly taught languages, especially in Chinese and Japanese, teacher recruitment has become an issue as administrators try to staff their burgeoning programs. Unfortunately, as Walton (1992) notes, there is a tendency to lower standards and to employ educated native speakers without professional training of any kind—an unfortunate by-product of the "give them a book and they can teach" mentality. In contrast to lower standards and willy-nilly recruitment efforts, "Exchange: Japan" provides an example of a coherent and credible teacher recruitment program. A key feature of the program is the nine-week intensive summer program required of the native speakers of Japanese participating in the program before they receive their postsecondary teaching assignments.

4. THE PAPER CHASE: TRADITIONAL CERTIFICATION

Teacher-certification requirements differ widely from state to state and do not reflect national policies or standards. In addition to the state-by-state diversity, each state's requirements include differences in the type and number of subject-matter courses and the content and organization of teacher-education courses. Foreign languages are no exception. Kleinsasser (1991) has reported the major differences between the foreign language content required for kindergarten through grade 12 certification and that required for 7–12 certification. Even a cursory examination of his findings reveals substantial variability in the number of language courses required by each state for certification. This extreme variability—the product of a lack of a cohesive policy statement about requirements for teacher certification—has grave implications for the quality of language teaching in the United States.

Surprisingly, many states do not require upper-level language study, thus allowing a goodly portion of required courses to be taken at the elementary level. Kleinsasser (1991) notes that although required foreign language courses generally include courses in grammar, composition, conversation, culture, and linguistics, some states do not include specific requirements and instead leave programmatic decisions to individual colleges or universities. Although some degree of quality control is exercised through the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and by individual states through their program evaluation procedures and state licensure boards, national or regional policies should be developed that give clear guidelines on the types of courses required for the certification of foreign language teachers.

Language proficiency requirements vary also. Based on information provided in Kleinsasser (1991) and Draper (1991), seventeen states presently require candidates to take the language portion of the National Teacher Examination (NTE) in French, German, and Spanish; five other states require candidates to take other standardized tests or proficiency tests developed in the state; and two states (Maine and Indiana) are currently considering the addition of a language proficiency requirement.

Wisconsin requires study abroad as part of its teacher preparation. Louisiana requires a two-semester or two-summer intensive study-abroad experience in French or an intermediate rating on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview. Although attention to proficiency requirements has increased dramatically over the past decade, there is still no consensus on which language skills should be required of prospective teachers, nor is there as yet a common metric used by all states to measure language proficiency.

5. THROUGH THE BACK DOOR? ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Alternative certification programs (ACPs), as their name implies, provide an alternative route to teacher certification, one that bypasses or waives the typical sequence of courses required in undergraduate teacher-education programs for individuals with subject-matter expertise. ACPs are seen as a reasonable response to teacher shortages and to public and private disenchantment with present teacher-education programs. Their increasing popularity is reflected in the number of states adopting ACPs. According to recent statistics (Corbin 1992), more than forty-eight states have some kind of alternative-route program. ACPs take different forms and are administered in a variety of ways—for example, by state departments of education, by universities, or by local school districts such as Los Angeles or Houston. They typically include shorter but more intensive coursework and require extensive fieldwork under the supervision of a mentor. In addition, candidates take full responsibility for a class from the beginning or quite soon after entering an ACP program rather than at the completion of a traditional teacher-education program.

As might be expected, ACPs have their proponents, but they are not without their vocal critics. Supporters believe that these nontraditional programs are an appropriate response to public and private dissatisfaction with lengthy and costly traditional teacher-education programs, and that carefully constructed ACPs—as opposed to emergency certification with lowered standards—will yield a cadre of effective teachers. They also see ACPs as a way to recruit qualified individuals who have subject-matter expertise but do not possess traditional teacher-education credentials. Critics, on the other hand, cite a variety of reasons for opposing a more widespread use of nontraditional programs: the lowering of standards, the devaluing of professional credentials, decreased professionalism, poorly prepared teachers who lack adequate knowledge of teaching or learning, and the uneven quality of such programs (Corbin 1992; Wise and Darling-Hammond 1992).

In any discussion of ACPs it is crucial to distinguish between a well-designed alternative certification program and certification that is awarded with lowered standards and requirements. Clearly, the latter has detriments for teachers and the students whom they serve. In foreign languages, administrators have from time to time sought exceptions to certification requirements in order to staff language programs in the schools, and this has often been the case in the less commonly taught languages. Walton (1992) points out the problems that occur when administrators lower certification standards for these teachers, especially for "complex languages that require a high degree of pedagogical sophistication and teacher training." He states further that the difficulty of these languages "does not mean that they are somehow immune to the usual canons of quality in teacher certification and curricular design and especially in objective accountability to the learner" (p. 13). Walton's concerns point to the importance of alternative certification programs that are well conceived and well monitored.

Whether in education in general or in the field of foreign languages in particular, alternative certification programs that seek new and innovative ways to inform and train teachers and that actively court nontraditional teacher candidates should be a part of our professional agenda and a part of policy discussions. Otherwise, faced with teacher shortages and budget restrictions, administrators could unwisely accept lower certification standards for certain groups of teachers and wittingly or unwittingly allow fly-by-night, ill-conceived programs to proliferate.

6. TEACHING TEACHERS TO TEACH

Diversity also exists in the kinds of courses required of prospective teachers. Some states provide rather elaborate guidelines prescribing in detailed fashion the types of courses required or the professional competencies desired for graduates; others have relatively short descriptions of required professional courses. Nonetheless, most teacher-training programs include courses in areas such as classroom management, developmental psychology, school administration, testing, foundations, and general or subject-matter-specific methods. Kleinsasser (1991) points out that student teaching and methods courses are usually part of the general education core rather than specific for foreign languages. Thus, many preservice teachers will not come into contact with a teacher educator who has knowledge of the teaching/learning process in foreign language contexts. Those who do will encounter instructors with a variety of backgrounds and expertise, including individuals with advanced degrees in pedagogy, local teachers, literature faculty members with an interest in pedagogy, and so on (Jarvis 1990).

Another problem in traditional teacher-education courses is the rigidity of the course sequence, which is in part due to state certification requirements and in part due to an unwillingness on the part of schools of education to reexamine curricula and requirements. In his provocative article about performance-based teacher certification, Murnane (1991) discusses the increasing numbers of older, more experienced people who come to the profession with job- and life-related experiences that have enabled them to learn skills needed to teach effectively. He suggests that teacher-education programs be tailored to fit the needs and experience of the prospective teacher, rather than following a set and rigid pattern that is not appropriate for an older, more mature group of students. Murnane further suggests that the certification process increase the amount and quality of evaluation given to teachers before permanent certification is granted.

At the postsecondary level, training of teaching assistants—the future professorate—has improved but is still inadequate. The worst scenario consists of the newly arrived graduate student who receives a book, a syllabus, and a class: "Give your students the book, and they will learn," the inexperienced teaching assistant is told. On a more positive note, an increasing number of universities provide preservice orientation programs for their graduate students. These programs vary in duration from a day or two to several weeks. An even smaller number of these programs are followed by courses in pedagogy designed to prepare future college professors for the context in which they will teach—that is, a liberal arts program in a college or university—or for teaching the language. In most cases literary preparation is the major content of their graduate studies in foreign languages. Rivers (1992) points out the importance of training professors in the teaching of language and culture, and suggests that this training include knowledge about the language, cross-cultural study, and extensive training in the teaching of language, literature, and culture. Training programs of this nature are needed because of the large amount of beginning language study that occurs at the postsecondary level in the United States. Although the need for pedagogical training is acute, most universities are reluctant to defy tradition in order to prepare more pedagogically sophisticated graduates: they have certainly not taken to heart the excellent recommendations of the MLA Commission on Foreign Languages, Literature, and Linguistics (1986).

Whether in the schools or at the postsecondary level, it is clear that there is no consensus on a variety of arenas related to teacher certification in general or to foreign languages specifically. A variety of questions remain unanswered. What constitutes the language proficiency of an American language teacher? How should that proficiency be measured? What constellation of professional courses will result in a well-prepared teacher? And finally, which tests should be required of teachers entering the profession? Although no consensus has yet been reached, the language organizations in the United States are well aware of these problems and are working toward the development of teacher-education guidelines for prospective foreign language teachers.

7. THE MANY VOICES OF POLICY: REPRISE

Until recently the American foreign language area was characterized by separate language groups, each at a different point in its deliberations, each working with only minimal contact with groups in other languages. The message delivered to the outside world was a lack of coherent planning and coordination among the players. Fortunately, foreign language educators are beginning to see the value of speaking with a common voice and in working collaboratively to develop foreign language policy. As Phillips (1990) indicates, until recently "little dialog occurred between policy makers and foreign language professionals" (p. 69). She detects a change in past patterns and credits this positive change to the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) and its political-action branch, the National Council for Languages and International Studies (NCLIS), which has worked actively to make foreign language professionals more attuned to policy issues and to work with Washington policymakers on behalf of foreign languages. The National Foreign Language Center, under the direction of Richard D. Lambert, has been instrumental in emphasizing the need for policymaking, coherent strategic planning, and attention to the system within which the foreign languages operate. In addition, greater cooperation and coordination are needed with those in charge of foreign languages at the state level. The National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages has the potential to fill this need, to influence the creation and implementation of policy, and to work as a coordinating body with other language organizations and JNCL.

Strides have also been made in the area of policy development for teacher education and training. In 1988 the ACTFL published its "Provisional Program Guidelines for Foreign Language Teacher Education" (1988). These guidelines include three major areas: (1) personal development (basically the skills gained from a strong liberal arts background); (2) professional development (general and language-specific teacher-education courses and experiences); and (3) specialist development (linguistic and cultural competencies). Unfortunately, the guidelines are still provisional and have had very little impact on the profession or on foreign language policy. Recently, however, the language associations in the commonly taught languages (American Association of Teachers of French, German, and Spanish) have begun to work closely with ACTFL to revise and refine the provisional teacher-education guidelines to include both entry-level and accomplished teachers. In addition, many of the organizations in the less commonly taught languages have become part of a national effort to provide direction and cohesion to these diverse languages. Their organization, the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages, is currently planning long-term strategies to develop teaching resources; one of these efforts is to encourage and motivate all of the teachers' organizations to identify their current sources of teachers and their training needs.

The collaborative efforts of these groups are welcome, and they provide positive directions to foreign language policy. Nonetheless, more coordination is needed so that foreign language professionals speak with one voice, not many, and so that the foreign language profession can be proactive, rather than reactive, in the creation of policy that affects its future. Bridging the gap between the foreign language profession and those currently instrumental in making policy—for example, legislators, business/political coalitions—is also essential. Increased cooperation between high-level policymakers and practitioners is perhaps even more critical given the estrangement between these two groups, and attention needs to be paid to both the initiation of policy and its implementation. Fullan (1991) points out that educational reformers "can be as authoritarian as the staunchest defenders of the status quo" (p. 950), and they thus need to be more attuned to the needs of those charged with classroom implementation of policies and reform measures.

Closer cooperation among the language organizations; closer working relationships with coalitions and networks, particularly those involving business and political leaders; coherent policy statements with origins in the foreign language arena; and greater involvement of practitioners in the process of policymaking and implementation—these are essential factors in addressing the problems outlined in this paper and in finding long-term solutions to them.

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SECTION IV

TESTING AND ASSESSMENT

TRANSPARENCY, COHERENCE, AND WASHBACK IN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

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As a point of departure, this paper first attempts to describe very briefly the "state of play" of language assessment, which I would characterize with three points: (1) a growing desire for clearly stated outcomes in terms of what the learner can do, comparable across systems; (2) an acceptance of the multidimensionality of proficiency, and discreditation of the claim to get a global result from one simple test; and (3) a limited concern on the part of formal testing to relate to learning, and an apparent inability on the part of "practitioner tests"—as well as a lot of formal tests—to keep pace with developments in what we know about language.

After elaborating on these points, the paper describes assessment as an information-exchange network (Schneider and Richterich forthcoming), and looks at assessment, washback, and the integration of learning and assessment through four questions: what information, how to organize and report information, what to test, and how to evaluate performance.

The paper concludes with a discussion of involving learners in the assessment process, and self-assessment.

1. THE STATE OF LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

1.1. Comparability of Outcomes

There certainly appears to be some coming together of different traditions at the moment, a tendency for systems to move toward each other. At an international level, there have been several developments:

- the moves toward a European framework from the Council of Europe and Lingua
- the groupings of examining institutions within ALTE, the Association of Language Testers in Europe (Cambridge, Alliance Française, etc.)
- the European Certificate Project, based in London

At national levels, in relation to the national language as a foreign language, there have been these:

- the comparison of EFL (English as a foreign language) examinations by the English Speaking Union (ESU) Framework Project (Carroll and West 1989)
- the suggestion that DELF/DALF, the Diplôme Elémentaire de Langue Française/Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française (Ministère de l'Education 1990), should become a calibration instrument (Porcher 1990)
- a recent move by the Goethe Institute to commission a survey of existing examinations for German

With ALTE and ESU one sees a trend for examining boards to redefine their exams in relation to each other, to provide a series of tests covering the range of ability, seen as a continuum (like a scale) rather than as a couple of pass/fail points. DELF/DALF is specifically designed to provide steps, units, covering a learning career.

In addition, in national education systems in relation to foreign languages, there have been these developments:

- in the United Kingdom, apart from the introduction of the National Curriculum with its ten-point scale, the development of calibration systems for the graded-objectives schemes (Page and Hewett 1987)
- in Switzerland, the establishment of objectives for the end of compulsory education (age sixteen) common to the twenty-six cantons (Vonarburg forthcoming)
- in the Netherlands, the establishment of a set of defined levels covering attainment in all educational sectors (Van Els forthcoming)

Finally, the Cambridge-TOEFL comparability study may be the forerunner of a series of such studies by the mainstream testing community itself (Bachman, Davidson, and Foulkes 1990).

These developments show an increasing interest on the part of educational administrators and managers in outcomes, products, and means of comparability among the different currencies involved. This interest is based on a desire to provide the language skills necessary for closer international economic ties, to facilitate the portability of qualifications in an increasingly mobile society, and to encourage greater learning productivity as learners switch between different educational contexts. It could also be argued that it is part of a more general free-market/liberal trend in which learners and their parents are seen more as consumers of (educational) services than as subjects of a national mass program.

1.2. Multidimensionality of Language

Pressure for mass programs yielding comparable results may have been one reason for the popularity of simple "integrative tests," which claim to activate "expectancy grammar," and thus to predict performance on other global language tests—and language success. The theory behind this, the "unitary competence hypothesis" (UCH)—that there is one general language competence (global proficiency), and that a single technique (e.g., cloze) could provide a valid simple answer—has been seriously discredited.

This point perhaps merits laboring because the idea continues to have a great hold on people's imagination: "The ideal test from [administrators'] point of view was one that could be set by, marked by, and possibly taken by a computer, lasted 30 minutes and cost 50p" (Carroll 1991, p. 24). Skehan, talking in 1989 about theoretical shortcomings in language testing, dismissed the basing of predictions about performance on scores on grammar tests, and later went on to say this:

> Another example [of a theoretical shortcoming] would be to think that the Unitary Competence Hypothesis is still alive and kicking. Perhaps this is less of a problem as the 80s end, but there is still a legacy of the UCH approach in the belief that some test formats contain wonderful properties and should be retained no matter what. The obvious example here is the cloze format in its "classic" nth word deletion form. (One might say the same for the longevity of the multiple-choice format—still the canonical test format for many.) (Skehan 1991, p. 3)

This claim for the "classic" cloze format was demolished by Alderson in 1978: "Cloze procedure is not a unitary procedure, since there is a marked lack of comparability among the tests it may be used to produce. The fact emerges clearly that different cloze tests, produced by variations in certain of the variables, give unpredictably different measures, particularly of proficiency in English as a foreign language" (Alderson 1978, p. 392). The claim was taken further by Woods and Hughes, who demonstrated that modified cloze (when you decide what to delete) was no better: "No single 'global' test will be accurate in its prediction of the ability of individuals (as opposed to groups) to perform the kind of tasks, such as the speaking sub-tests, associated with these components. If we want to measure an ability accurately, then as far as possible we have to measure *it* and not what we think may underlie all language ability" (Woods and Hughes 1983, p. 57). Weir, then, can summarize thus: "The discredited holy grails of the psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic era, such as cloze, are still seen to have a minor role to play in adding reliability to test batteries and assessing the more linguistic skills, but centre stage is now given to more direct attempts to operationalise communicative competence" (Weir 1989, p. 11).

Bachman's theoretical model for explaining performance on language tests (Bachman 1990b, p. 348), based on empirical research on Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence (Canale and Swain 1981), highlights the effects of "test method facets," which reinforces the case for a variety of realistic test tasks, rather than continuing the search for the panacea-like c-tests, which have been developed in an attempt to find a more suitable technique than cloze for testing general language proficiency (Klein-Braley and Raatz 1985). Variants have, of course, appeared; we experimented with them in 1987–89 in Eurocentre Bournemouth with versions looking like this:

> Various claims are made for C-Tests. One i . that th .. correlate bet ... with info ..... teacher judg .... than cl ... tests o . batteries o . discrete-po ... tests. O .. experience s . far app .... to con .... this.

J. B. Carroll, who was the first person to start using cloze tests in second language testing, was certainly guarded in his review of Klein-Braley and Raatz's book:

> The C-Test procedure strikes one as somewhat arbitrary and not obviously the fairest and most effective way of "reducing redundancy," if that is what is wanted, however simple and convenient it may be.... The C-Test procedure appears to have somewhat limited uses. Most of the uses reported in this book [Klein-Braley and Raatz 1985] involved situations where all that was required was a quick, approximate, non-diagnostic assessment of competence with the language in its written form. The C-Test should not be expected to replace more traditional procedures when more informative, accurate and diagnostic assessments are needed. (J. B. Carroll 1986, pp. 99–106)

C-tests certainly have face-validity problems (Hughes 1989; Weir 1989; Bradshaw 1990), but even if these can be overcome, there is a more fundamental problem:

> What surely matters is not the authenticity of the test itself—tests have built-in authenticity.... What matters is the effect that any test will have on any preparation leading to it. That must be the overriding concern over this question of direct versus indirect tests.... Tests will always have a washback: hence it is important to make sure that as far as possible the test and the teaching syllabus and method are coordinated and that one does not outrun the other. (Davies 1991, p. 147)

Many people would still agree with Davies "on the grounds of common sense that, at some level, there is a unitary language skill, the level at which the distinctions among the performance skills of speaking, writing etc. are unimportant" (Davies 1991, pp. 139–40), and would therefore continue to report examination results as a global grade rather than (or in addition to) as a profile across the four skills. However, most testers now feel that in order to get a valid assessment of proficiency, it is necessary to use a variety of contrasting test tasks and assessment procedures—from which you can give people some information about their performance that will encourage learning.

1.3. Testing and Learning

There is a recognition that formal testing, perhaps influenced by the UCH saga, has been too concerned with snapshots of proficiency or reliability statistics rather than being used to aid learning. Moreover, while innovation has occurred in many examinations, testing in the classroom, and tests attached to coursebooks, have not benefited as much as might be expected from the developments in communicative methodology of the 1970s and 1980s:

> One of the most serious shortcomings in language testing has been the lack of progress in (or even concern for) the *growth* and *development* of proficiency. There has been a corresponding stagnation in the area of achievement testing, and the measurement of learning.... Most coursebooks and syllabuses emerge with scant thought for the assessment implications that are involved, and generally treat the need for accompanying tests as a perfunctory afterthought. Few resources are put into the production of effective tests or accompany the mushrooming textbook industry, and where tests do exist, even for "communicative" courses, they often use quite conservative and discredited test formats. (Skehan 1988, pp. 219–20)

In other words, things have not moved much on the ground. The link between summative assessment and formative assessment has been too weak, where it has existed at all. Although a lot of progress has been made in the design of formal tests and examinations around "authentic" or at least challenging tasks to assess language *use*, reforms generally much admired by teachers, most teachers themselves have not moved far (if at all) from their traditional testing of language *usage* with gap-filled tests of sentence-level grammar and vocabulary, which they use to see if learners have learned the course content.

On the other hand, testers are getting more interested in learning, and many teachers are dissatisfied with the gap between communicative teaching and traditional testing, including their own, and are interested in broadening what they understand by assessment:

> There is currently an upsurge of interest in informal, qualitative means of assessment which has been accompanied by a crisis of confidence in large-scale standardised proficiency testing (witness for example the debates in the United States over the TOEFL Test [Stansfield 1986] and the ACTFL guidelines [Bachman and Savignon 1986; Lantolf and Frawley 1985, 1988]. (Brindley 1989, p. 19)
>
> In keeping with the emphasis which is given in current curriculum models to learning processes as opposed to learning outcomes, assessment is now regarded not only as a means of measuring results but also as an aid to learning, and thus as an integrated part of the curriculum rather than something which is "tacked on" at the end. In this climate, teachers are turning increasingly to qualitative methods of monitoring and assessing learner's

> attainment in the classroom, such as self assessment scales [Dickinson 1987; Underhill 1987], profiles of achievement [RSA 1988] and feedback from non-teachers [Lewcowitz and Moon 1985]. (Brindley 1991, p. 153)

These developments reflect an interest on the part of the profession for processes, and mirror a shift in emphasis from the *learner*-centered approaches of the 1970s (define your learner, needs analysis, language specifications) to the *learning*-centered approaches of the late 1980s (awareness raising, reduce affective barriers, adopt positive strategies). As Brindley has pointed out, this process interpretation of achievement testing can and does clash with the outcome/product interpretation of the managers, and this clash can cause conflict—or nonproductive standoffs (Brindley 1989).

Yet there need be no incompatibility between the two positions. The latter approach is an addition, not a substitute. As Kohonen points out, "Both kinds of assessment, product and process assessment, are needed for different purposes in the total educational setting," but "more professional thinking needs to be devoted to the development of process evaluation since this can have a powerful effect on shaping the ongoing learning process" (Kohonen 1989).

Regular criterion-referenced product assessment can also be part of the process, particularly if transparent criteria are used that give teacher and learner a metalanguage with which to observe and discuss a performance. Such observation and discussion can contribute to greater teacher and learner awareness of what is being aimed at, what has actually been achieved, and what should be concentrated on. This sort of approach tends to be associated with adults, but experience in the United Kingdom in the graded-objectives movement, especially the OCEA (Oxford Certificates in Educational Achievement) scheme (University of Oxford 1987), suggests that it can also be used with secondary school children. Profiles of achievement and samples of production from product assessment, "coursework" projects (assessed to give them value), could form a personal portfolio that could contribute to a feeling of success and ownership.

ASSESSMENT AS AN INFORMATION NETWORK

Seeing assessment as the principled observation of performances in a variety of tasks, in order to gather information and to report relevant aspects of that information to interested parties, is to see assessment as an information network between equal partners (Schneider and Richterich forthcoming).

This information-exchange process is facilitated if the assessment procedure is open and comprehensible (transparent), and if it is internally consistent and has reference points where comparisons can be made with other systems (coherent). Results that are communicated in norm-referenced terms like "8/20; 3.5; D" can only relate to microsystems like "this teacher's class in relation to past classes" or "this examination population in relation to past populations." They tend to be used as a component of "your overall place in the class/year cohort" rather than telling you how good you are at French, and to make any sense of the information, you have to know the system.

This is not to say that norm-referenced systems have no value. If a child is less gifted, why shouldn't he or she be able to get "good marks" normed around what can be reasonably expected of him or her? Education is about much more than meritocracy; it is also about giving less gifted children the self-esteem and skills to integrate into society and contribute to it. Judging by results from a British perspective, the Swiss educational system seems a model of how to do this, yet it is totally norm-referenced by continuous teacher assessment.

As is the way with reactions, there is sometimes a tendency to say "criterion-referenced = good, norm-referenced = bad." One crucial question seems to be, How can one retain the positive features of norm-referenced systems—be judged in the context of your peers, and what you are capable of at that stage—in a system based on transparent and absolute values? How can one avoid devaluing modest achievement by putting it in the context of higher achievement, or all the things the learner *cannot* do?

The Swiss response in modern languages is to start working for more transparency and coherence by identifying how the different microsystems in the overall systems relate; how the norm (a "4.0") at a certain point might relate to the norm at another; what the vocational sector should be able to expect from the lower secondary sector that feeds it learners. This may lead to a common scale of language proficiency used as a common reference point primarily for end-users.

A further step would be to encourage the various microsystems to make the criteria on which they base their judgments more explicit, and perhaps to organize those criteria (or standards in achieving them) into a series of small steps within the sector, like graded objectives, through which the learner could see progress. This point is elaborated in the next section.

Seeing assessment from the point of view of an information system seems to me to revolve around four central questions:

- What information (why test when? what for?)
- How to organize and report information (what for? who for?)
- What to test (competence model; content; sampling)
- How to evaluate performance (to count or to judge)

2.1. What Information

People talk about product and process, proficiency and achievement, summative and formative, integrative and discrete, but underneath these distinctions, it seems to me, there is a division into information that answers two simple questions: "Where am I?" and "What do I need to do now?"

"What do I need to do now?" (formative, diagnostic, micro) is obviously on the process side, and this is the question all teachers answer with tests and advice. To get this information, they tend to concentrate on testing listable content—language usage—in discrete form so that they can decide what to recycle, and what to tell people to revise.

But "Where am I?" ("What level am I?") is a very reasonable question at the beginning and in the middle as well as at the end of a course, and a question that the system and the teachers are often not interested in answering. Yet you need to know where you are standing in order to have an accurate perspective. An accurate perspective can help you set (or be set) realistic aims, which if they come in bite-sized chunks you can feel happy about succeeding in, and which can sustain your motivation in what is, after all, a difficult process.

Both types of information are relevant at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of a course or school year:

	WHERE I AM (holistic)	WHAT I NEED (discrete)
START	Where we are (placement) (orientation)	What we are going to do (diagnostic)
		What we did this week/ month (reinforcement)
		Have I got this now? (achievement)
DURING	How am I doing? (progress this term)	What should I concentrate on next? (diagnostic)
		What we did this week/ month (reinforcement)
		Have I got this now? (achievement)

END	Where am I now? (what can/could I do now?)	What we did (record of content) (advice on continuing learning—nice, but rarely acted on, if given)

The left-hand column implies a "coherent and transparent system which will enable learners to find their place and assess their progress in relation to certain defined reference points" (Council of Europe forthcoming): a series of levels, a scale that is communicated to learners, perhaps through charts or video samples.

The fact that there is a relationship between the left-hand and right-hand columns implies that this scale has specifications for these levels:

- specifications in terms of the language content necessary to attain a functional capacity to use the language—specifications like, for example, the "Threshold Level" (Van Ek and Trim 1990) (quantitative)
- specifications in terms of the performance required, expressed in terms of criteria (qualitative)

"What I need" feedback can be given about what learners have achieved and do well, and where they need to concentrate to make more progress in terms of both types of specifications: points in the syllabus (quantitative), and aspects of their performance (qualitative).

2.2. How to Organize and Report Information

A scale of proficiency can be used to organize and report these types of information and to provide a link between sets of specifications for objectives (quantitative) and "grades" awarded for performance (qualitative).

A scale can be used to relate results from teacher assessment, self-assessments, tests, and examinations. Both Alderson and Carroll discuss ways of converting test scores to scale grades (Alderson 1991; Carroll 1980; Carroll and Hall 1985); Oscarson reports the use of scales for self-assessment (Oscarson 1981); and the ESU Framework Project has demonstrated that a scale can be used as a neutral yardstick to calibrate existing examinations (Carroll and West 1989).

Language specifications covering the content that is necessary to achieve a particular performance at each level can be produced by analyzing what is implied by the descriptors of the scale, as is done with the ELTDU (English Language Teaching Development Unit) Stages of Attainment scale. Alternatively, an analysis and revision of existing specifications—a revision to ensure that they teach content because it is necessary for the specified level of attainment, and not just because it is there—and an investigation of performance levels reached through those content specifications can be defined in terms of a scale. Both approaches can, of course, be used interactively in defining a scale for an existing system—the approach we used in Eurocentres.

It may be that coherence between educational sectors in a country can be achieved without a scale, but the existence of a scale could increase the transparency of the resultant system considerably, and could make it a lot easier to compare with other systems.

In designing or choosing a scale, there seem to be three key issues: the number of levels, the skills/domains, and the orientation of the scale (who is it for, and will they understand it?).

Levels. Over the years people have produced scales going from zero to native-speaker proficiency with six, seven, eight, and nine levels, in addition to partial scales that cover less ground with more levels to show progress. The original scale of proficiency, the U.S. Foreign Service Institute (FSI) scale developed in the 1950s and now called the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale, originally had six defined levels (0–5) to report results from an Oral Proficiency Interview. The system is product-oriented, interested in results—in whether a candidate has a language level sufficient for a diplomatic or CIA mission—with a bias to high levels of proficiency. Wilkins in 1978 provided detailed definitions for the seven levels that he said could be readily identified; the ELTDU Stages of Attainment scale (ELTDU 1975) has eight clearly defined levels from A to H; and finally the ESU Framework scale, starting from Wilkins's seven levels, settled for nine levels, like the British Council/University of Cambridge IELTS (International English Language Testing Service) scale and Carroll's other nine-point scales. The chart reproduced here as figure 1 (North 1992b) gives a rough, preliminary, subjective calibration of these scales, plus two partial scales from the U.K. National Curriculum and from Eurocentres, both of which, like the Proficiency Guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, cover less ground with more levels.

The point I would like to make is that scales that are criterion-referenced can be related to each other by looking at the descriptors on the scales themselves; at the language content in specifications related to the scales; at the defined degrees of skill/quality of performance required; at official samples of performance; at specifications for tests and examinations; and at past examination papers. One can thereby arrive at provisional equivalences that can then themselves be checked by correlation studies, without necessarily going to the level of detail of statistical analysis of the Cambridge-TOEFL comparability studies (Bachman, Davidson, and Foulkes 1990).

Scales, like tests, are usually designed for a population and a purpose. The existing and projected population, and the "critical points" in the system where people change educational sectors, may determine the points on the scale. Yet there is a tension between having, on the one hand, fewer, broader levels that correspond to

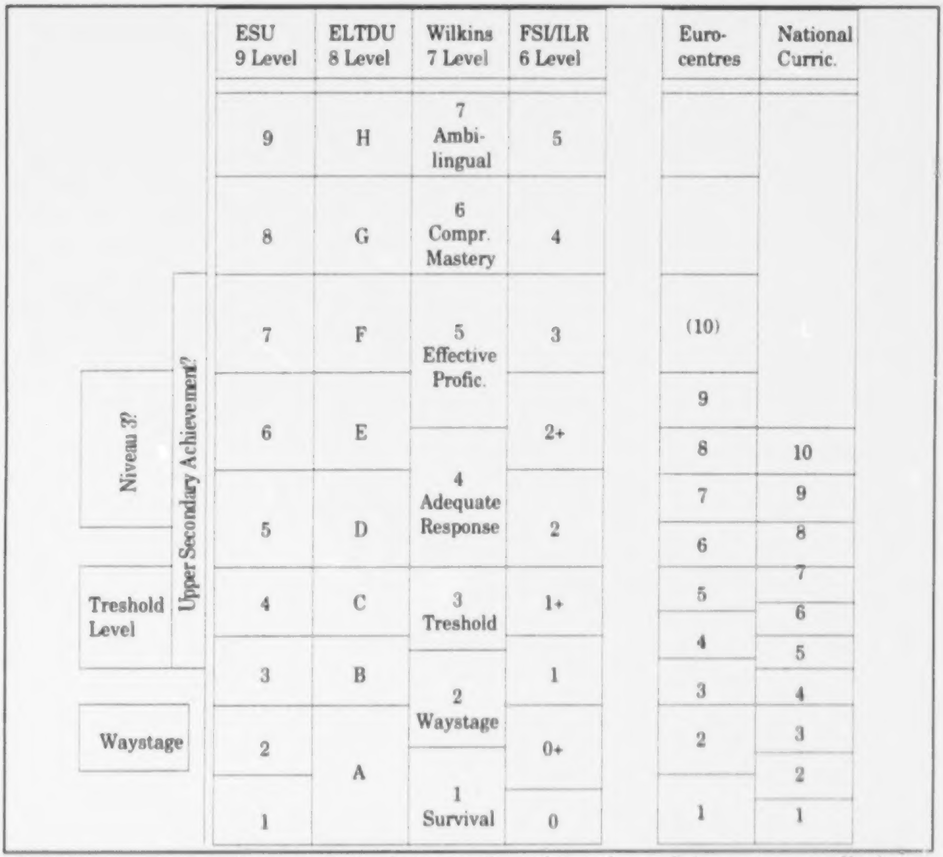
ESU 9 Level
ELTDU 8 Level
Wilkins 7 Level
FSI/ILR 6 Level
Euro-centres
National Curric.
9
H
7 Ambi-lingual
5
8
G
6 Compr. Mastery
4
7
F
5 Effective Profic.
3
(10)
Niveau 3?
Upper Secondary Achievement?
6
E
2+
9
8
10
5
D
4 Adequate Response
2
7
9
6
8
Treshold Level
4
C
3 Treshold
1+
7
5
6
4
5
3
B
1
3
4
Waystage
2
2 Waystage
0+
2
3
A
2
1
1 Survival
0
1
1

Figure 1. **Approximate equivalences of scales of proficiency: a preliminary subjective calibration.**

educational sectors, crucial examinations, and socially significant levels like "Threshold Level," and having, on the other hand, narrower levels aiming to provide objectives and motivation during the learning process itself. Should the levels be dictated by social requirements, or by the pace of learning?

The advantage of a set of broadly based levels is that it is relatively easy to agree on equivalences with other systems, one is not being too precise, and it is clear how the different sections of the system fit together. This is the approach in Switzerland: defining "points of encounter" (Vonarburg forthcoming) where one educational sector should pass over to the next. The main disadvantage of broad levels is that, as with the original 1950s six-band FSI scale, they emphasize the product of the success of the few rather than encouraging the process of successful learning by the many. With narrower levels like the new U.K. National Curriculum, learners can make visible motivating progress. In the United Kingdom, experience with graded objectives and recent examination reforms suggest that more learners continue with learning the language, even learn it more successfully, when they can see some progress.

A solution we have found in Eurocentres is to use both sizes of unit in what is in effect a "twin scale":

- broad levels with names like "intermediate" and "advanced" to describe courses, to use for the organization and color-coding of resources (objectives being aimed at, content)
- narrower numbered levels serving as subdivisions of the above into two or three grades of achievement for certification (performance attained)

In a national system a twin approach could be that the broader levels relate to "critical points," different sectors, and the narrower levels to miniscales within those sectors, overlapping each other at the top and bottom but forming one common scale. The number and size of units of the narrower microscales would not need to be the same; there could be more units in the bottom chunk(s) where many children would spend their entire school career.

Progress, however, is not only vertical; sometimes it means more breadth—more range, more confidence, more sophistication. These are, of course, factors (performance criteria) commonly used to determine examination grades, and they could be lead factors in deciding a learner's current position on the type of microscale suggested above to cover the range of one set of "sector" specifications. Hence, "breadth" can be accommodated in a vertical system of levels or steps.

Categories of use. However, some progress is definitely sideways in that it relates to adding contexts in which you can operate: beginners do not generally listen to the radio, intermediate students do not normally write complex reports. A scale used to describe proficiency needs horizontal categories.

Most certificates, including the new Eurocentres one, use the familiar, convenient division between global proficiency and the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. While most people find this intuitively adequate, there is an alternative approach, one more associated with language for specific purposes (LSP), of looking at language activities in order to encourage a use-oriented system. One way might be to omit the global scale and focus on what various writers have seen as three main aspects of language use: understanding (one-way, receptive), interacting (two-way, live), and prepared production (one-way, productive). These themselves could be subdivided pragmatically into main fields of activity learners might recognize that they engage in, whatever domain they are concerned with: comprehension (viewing, listening, reading), oral interaction (conversation, transactions, meetings), and production (letters, reports, presentations).

This is not to suggest that these fields are in any way a definitive set. Indeed, the problem with departing from the classic four-skills approach is finding a justification for whatever functional fields are chosen: "Why *this* set of functions, uses, rather than any other?" (Davies 1990, p. 41, discussing the ELTDU scale). In addition, it is a relatively widely held view that a functional approach can only be taken within a specific domain, with the implicit corollary that there is no such thing as a functionally definable "general English" such as learned by most West European secondary school children or by participants in nonspecific intensive four- to twelve-week courses in the United Kingdom or United States—with, in turn, the additional implicit corollary that no scale of general language proficiency could be valid (e.g., Stevenson 1985; Spolsky 1986).

Yet this is clearly a question of degree. First, during the 1980s there was a noticeable disillusionment with the "specific" form of language for specific purposes (e.g., Munby 1978), as it was discovered that teaching more generalizable functional skills was more practical (e.g., see Ingram and Clapham 1988). Second, Spolsky himself accepts the original Council of Europe "Threshold Level" for adults on short stays abroad (Van Ek 1975), both as a legitimate functional content specification and as representing a domain that could be described by a scale of proficiency (Spolsky 1986, p. 154; 1989, p. 65). So a question that presents itself is, At what point do the various versions of threshold produced (for schoolchildren, for immigrants), the various reinterpretations of the threshold idea (by curriculum developers, by examination boards, by coursebook writers), cease to be "valid" because the general domain defined has become too general?

The first step in the development of the Eurocentres framework for general language learning in intensive courses in areas where the language is spoken was a survey of perceived needs with a 30 percent representative sample of Eurocentres U.K. students (with backup structured interviews for 10 percent of the total sample), supplemented by smaller samples for French, German, and Italian. The survey appeared to demonstrate a very definable domain of general English. Differences across nationality and course type (intensive/holiday) were relatively insignificant, and differences across level were logical, confirming intuitions. The one big surprise was the almost total lack of interest, on the part of even beginners, in the rather sterile, utilitarian kind of transactional "survival language" (buying tickets, reading menus, etc.) that was very much in vogue at the time—thanks to the tendency to try to make general language "specific to the context" in a Munby-like tradition.

A survey can reveal information about tasks, and can perhaps inform the decision on how to organize those tasks into domains—four skills or something else—but ultimately that decision can probably only be made subjectively in the context of the pedagogic culture. In fact, the way the teachers or other users think, or a careful judgment on how far toward some desired model it is feasible to take them, is likely to be at least as significant in that decision as the theoretical validity of the divisions proposed.

At any rate, "holding on to nurse for fear of something worse" means that the vast majority of scales of proficiency stick to a four-skills model. What is being proposed here is that taking "language activity" rather than skills as the organizing principle of the domains in a scale is at least worth considering because it could

- be an alternative corresponding more closely to real use, which could have beneficial backwash;
- aid modular thinking and planning;
- aid harmonization between a system for general language and one for language for specific purposes; and
- encourage the development of limited objectives, leading to what have been described as "partial qualifications" for a multilingual Europe: first foreign language, all three areas, second comprehension and interaction, and third just comprehension (North 1992b and forthcoming).

Orientation and style. This is one of the most complicated issues in developing scales of proficiency. A full discussion is given by Alderson and Pollitt (Alderson 1991; Pollitt 1991). There are lots of problems, but three salient ones are (1) how to avoid negative formulation at the bottom (Trim 1978); (2) how to avoid vague generalizations that command acceptance precisely because they could mean anything (Trim 1978); and how (whether?) to report about things you have not tested (Alderson 1991; Pollitt 1991).

Scales developed for one purpose can be difficult to use for another. Alderson has identified three types according to function: constructor-oriented, for syllabus, material, and test writers; assessor-oriented, for use in direct assessment; and user-oriented, for reporting results to nonspecialist clients (Alderson 1991). In Eurocentres we have developed subscales of all three types, but in practice, the ones we find most useful are the user-oriented ones (global and four-skills, for a certificate) and the assessor-oriented ones (speaking, writing). The original constructor-oriented scales, written in 1983, were analyzed to produce a set of language specifications, and it is those specifications—in the form of checklists of key tasks and key language—rather than the original scale itself that are now being used together with the assessor and user scales.

As an example, the following definitions come from the English original of an adaptation of the Eurocentres scales for a national electricity authority, which wanted a nine-point scale from zero to native speaker. The examples given are for the fourth band, corresponding approximately to the range of proficiency represented by our interpretation of performance standards for "Threshold Level" (which is two bands, 4 and 5, in our own internal system). The global scale gives references to examinations in English, German, and French; the scales for the four skills are intended to be part of a self-assessment questionnaire; the spoken interaction assessment scale is for use in an interview.

GLOBAL

Routine communication: Can handle extensive simpler information and deal flexibly with practical everyday demands. Has reached a "Threshold" level at which he has a relatively wide range of simple language which he can exploit flexibly, if hesitantly and often inaccurately. Can maintain conversation and operate adequately in simple, routine professional contexts.

SELF-ASSESSMENT SCALES

Listening: I can understand clear, simple usage in structured, routine contexts, and can catch the main points in relevant training material, simpler documentaries, talks etc. where the delivery is slow and clear.

Speaking: I can maintain conversation and discussion in routine contexts with some cooperation from the person I am talking to, though I find it very difficult to express what I really want to, and I make a lot of mistakes.

Reading: I can find and understand relevant information in simple written material in routine contexts. I can recognize the significant points in straightforward articles connected with my field.

Writing: I can write short, routine letters in my area provided they consist mainly of standard phrases which are available for reference. My writing is not easy to follow unless I employ a model.

SPOKEN INTERACTION—INTERVIEW SCALE

Can maintain conversation and discussion on familiar subjects in a structured context, making himself understood with some cooperation from the person he is talking to:

Range: Adequate command of the basics, including expressing reasons, connections between ideas, events, but a limited repertoire—can't always say what he really wants to—often needs to compromise the message.

Accuracy: Frequent errors, possibly a heavy L1 interference on pronunciation, but intelligible virtually all the time.

Fluency: Frequent false starts and reformulations; difficult to follow when trying to say exactly what he wants to.

The self-assessment scales were developed by merging the statements for Levels 4 and 5 in the version of the Eurocentres scale used on our certificate. These user-oriented descriptors were developed with the aid of non-native-speaker informants so as to be intelligible in the target language to people at the level concerned:

5. Can maintain a conversation or discussion and give extended descriptions and explanations but may sometimes be difficult to follow when trying to say exactly what he/she wants to in less familiar situations.

4. Can take part in conversation and exchange information in everyday situations, expressing him/herself with some cooperation from the person he/she is talking to. (Eurocentres Scale of Language Proficiency, certificate version, speaking)

Earlier drafts of these definitions included lists of "key tasks" from our language specifications (derived from an analysis of our original source scales), but we decided that there was a problem here connected with sampling: these tasks are considered "key" to the level, but we cannot guarantee that a student has been seen to do them, and so how can we certify that he or she *can* do them?

The wording of a scale reporting achievement must be related to what was assessed. The question is, How closely? It is impractical and bureaucratic to test everything; sampling and generalization from it are an established part of testing tradition—though more in relation to indirect tests of underlying competence.

Nevertheless, there is a clear limit to what performance of one task says about potential performance of another, and there is a limit to the amount of information about tasks that can be included in a certificate reporting proficiency before people start to question whether the link is too thin and the certificate loses face validity.

There is also a second problem. If information about content is attached to a proficiency statement, and if continuous assessment rather than a test is used to award the certificate, it invites the teacher automatically to award the people in the same class (who followed the same content) the same statement, resulting in certificates based on time spent in a classroom—not on proficiency. This does nothing to encourage learning; quite the contrary, effort makes no difference. Such an approach could expose learners to a nasty shock if they meet reality—or take an examination.

The kind of "key task" list we considered including for Level 4 speaking was as follows. It was derived from the original source scales, of which there were three for speaking (or for listening and speaking), concerning exchanging information; expressing opinions and judgments; and establishing and maintaining social relationships. These three functional domains were decided after interpreting the data from the 1983 survey referred to earlier. Each task (in Levels 1–6, at any rate) had an analysis of the functions implied, with structures implied and example exponents. All this content was collated across the scales as the language specifications.

SPEAKING LEVEL 4

Information:

- ask for, check, and pass on simple information politely

- tell a story, describe events and experiences
- explain a problem, describe reasons, causes, and effects
- give directions, describe how to do something

Opinion:

- discuss topics of interest
- discuss reasons for events, and their results

Social:

- organize an event (e.g., an outing), describe the plan to others
- take part in small talk as a guest
- ask how people are, indicate feelings, and react to news

This shortened list of "key tasks" appears in an overview of each level, which is intended to help teachers in planning their course. We have discussed the possibility of adding to our certificate, at some future date, a course record that might contain a list of the tasks actually covered by the class, put together by the teachers from the coverage of Level 4, bits of Level 3 they recycled, bits of Level 5 they did at the end, and bits the teachers added themselves.

A final logical step would be to give performance grades for each task, turning the course record into a trace of the achievement of proficiency. This approach would probably be impractical in our context of short, intensive courses, but in a mainstream educational context it is certainly worth considering. In OCEA English (mother tongue), the children color in the outer rim of a circle representing a task when they think they can do it, their friend colors in a middle rim, and then they show it to the teacher; the teacher observes the task and, if the performance meets the criteria for that level, lets the children color in the center, and then enters the task on the pupil profile.

2.3. What to Test

The previous discussion was about the predictive and content validity, and hence face validity, of reporting scales. The question of what to test concerns *construct validity* (the assumed model of competence that determines the types of assessment tasks, as well as the criteria for judgments and weighting of different factors) and *content validity* (the fit of test content and tasks to the specifications, and so course content).

Face validity, the acceptance of the approach by users of the system (learners, teachers, employers), seems to me to be a combination of presentation factors with construct, content, and predictive validity—with different ranking priority for the different users.

Washback validity (Morrow 1986) is the most significant if we are concerned with promoting progress rather than just measuring it. This concerns how the decisions made in relation to all these validities interrelate to promote (or discourage) effective teaching and learning.

A simple way of expressing all this is provided by Swain (1985): "Start from somewhere; concentrate on content; bias for best; work for washback."

Start from somewhere means have a theory of language underlying your testing model, and do not contradict it for the sake of short-term gain.

Concentrate on content means give the test attractive content, illustrations—make it look nice. Provide substantive input that is about something interesting, an integrated pack around a theme. Set tasks that are interactive—that is, give a chance for the expression of ideas.

Bias for best means design tasks that will allow students to show their best, rather than setting traps and thinking, "That'll get them!" Allow enough time, tell the students what the different parts of the test are doing, allow reference books, and do not be afraid to intervene to make sure the students are doing the test correctly.

Work for washback means plan for positive washback. Don't just feel good about the *potential* beneficial washback; plan to see that it happens by involving teachers as advisers, and in the trialing and administration.

"Start from somewhere"—have a model, know why you do things, and be able to explain it to people—is the very essence of transparency.

Stern discusses single, twofold, threefold, fourfold, and multiple-component models of language proficiency that have been used for assessment (Stern 1983, pp. 356–57). These can be summarized as follows:

- *single concept*—Oller's expectancy grammar (Oller 1976/1983), which underlies the cloze tests and c-tests discussed earlier

- *twofold concepts* like a distinction between linguistic competence and communicative competence, or Cummins's (1979) distinction between BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills—"salient rapidly developed aspects of communicative proficiency"; Cummins 1984, p. 4) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency—the socially grounded, normative, decontextualized language that tends to get tested in school tests)

- *threefold concepts* like Canale and Swain's well-known distinction among grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence (Canale and Swain 1980, 1981)

- *fourfold concepts* like the classic four-skills one going back at least to Lado (1961) and Stern's own distinction among formal mastery, semantic mastery, communicative capacity, and creativity (Stern 1983)

- *multiple categories* like Carroll's (1968) grid relating the four skills to grammar, lexicon, and phonology/orthography, or the parameters of proficiency used in the Council of Europe "Threshold Level" inventories (Van Ek 1975; Van Ek and Trim 1990)

Few people would now take the "single concept" as a basis for designing tests (see Alderson 1981). However, there is the opposite danger of assuming that an effective test battery must be a complex test battery. One does not necessarily need to have multiple tests in order to catch multiple categories, and indeed recent research suggests that these categories are merely aspects of competence that combine in different ways, rather than components that can be separately tested (e.g., see discussion in Bachman 1990a; Schachter 1990). Furthermore, economy (feasibility) is in many respects even more important than validity or reliability in designing an assessment system.

In Eurocentres U.K. we have recently put into full operation a quite sophisticated but minimalist twofold position in which continuous assessment of the four skills is "anchored"—intelligently rather than arithmetically—by a core grade arrived at by averaging the performance on a formal direct assessment of group interaction (North 1991, 1992a), and from a test generated by a computer item bank of (so far) one thousand items related to the language specifications and calibrated to the scale using the Rasch model of item-response theory (Jones 1991, 1992).

For the activity, the teacher can choose the task (from an approved range of possibilities), and there is a standardized assessment procedure; for the item bank, the teacher can design the test, selecting level, content, and item types (from a given range of possibilities), and there is standardized scoring. The two tests are intended to catch the ends of many of the dichotomies in testing, rather than making compromises.

GROUP INTERACTION	ITEMBANKER
Direct	Indirect
Subjective	Objective
Use	Usage
Holistic	Atomistic/discrete
Spoken	Written
"Natural" activity	Exercise
Interactive	Solitary
Task-based	Grammar and vocabulary

Language *as* communication	Language *for* communication
Feedback in performance criteria	Feedback on language points
Possibilities for self- and peer assessment, learner training in the criteria	Possibilities for individual computer-adaptive test and diagnostic
High validity	High reliability
Acceptable reliability	Acceptable validity
Progressive	Traditional

Both tests can be claimed to be simultaneously achievement, proficiency, progress, and diagnostic tests. Feedback from the interaction can be given in terms of points related to the criteria, and from Itembanker, the computer-generated test on specific language points related to the syllabus. The test tasks relate to the language specifications derived from the scale; the tests report a result onto the global scale, which the teachers can use as a basis for their profile. Since the teachers know the students, and know the reporting scale descriptors, they are able to flesh out the "snapshot" in this way, and the anchor provided by the global grade maintains consistency in their judgments—a coherence between classes, between schools, and between our scale and other scales.

The correlation between the two halves of the global grade was relatively high in a recent experiment (0.87: n=166, Levels 1–10 on the scale), which is what one might expect in an "acquisition-rich" environment—for example, EFL in the United Kingdom—with two instruments that work. This does not mean that they test the same thing; a very different picture might be expected to emerge in an "acquisition-poor" environment—for example, EFL two hours a week at home (see Tucker 1974, cited in Canale and Swain 1980; Upshur and Palmer 1974, cited in Palmer 1983; Ingram 1985). Rather, what this suggests is that the students are learning what is being taught, and that the assessment procedures are testing what has been taught—that the system is coherent.

We use a wide range of oral-interaction tasks successfully. What they have in common is, first, that they are so-called "two-way tasks" (Brown 1991; Long and Porter 1985), jigsaw tasks that exploit information and opinion gaps to promote negotiation (just describing a picture is a "one-way task"—who cares?); and, second, that they give a sample of both spontaneous interaction when no one has the floor, and semi-prepared, longer, coherent turns as each learner in the group explains his bit. Most tasks have three recognizable phases: a collaborative phase in which the group works together on its part of the task; an exchange phase for which groups are generally remixed and in which each learner at some point gets the floor for an informal mini-presentation; and a discussion phase (North 1986, 1991).

We don't use interviews, partly because they disrupt the program and are relatively inefficient in terms of the learning time lost (interview, six students per hour; group interaction, thirteen students per hour; Berkoff 1985), but mainly because they have come under increasing criticism as an unequal encounter in which the interviewer is prosecuting and defending counsel, judge, and jury all at once. Discourse studies at the English Language Research Department at the University of Birmingham (England) have shown that interviews perpetuate teacher dominance into the testing situation, and interviewees are in practice unable to take the initiative in the discourse, and thus to demonstrate their full range of language competence (see also Van Lier 1989). Recently there have also been some indications that the gender and manner of the interviewer have a complex effect on the performance generated, especially with non-European students (Porter 1991).

The best counterarguments in favor of the interview are that the interviewer is able to concentrate on one candidate, taking the interview to that person's "linguistic breaking point" to ensure that his or her full range has come out—the interviewer, rather than a possibly less than perfect piece of material, is eliciting the language (Ingram 1986); that unequal conversations are not necessarily less natural than equal ones; and that a self-assessment questionnaire used as a "springboard" to discussion is not unknown, especially in an adult context (Underhill 1987).

However, there is a current trend toward group interaction, as Skehan summarizes:

> In the past testers have no doubt been put off the use of group testing techniques because of the introduction of a nonstandardising influence, i.e. one student potentially dominating or not allowing the other students to perform to their full abilities. This argument has weighed more heavily than the naturalness that might come from using groups (a not untypical setting for language use in real life) and from avoiding the asymmetric power relations involved in tester-testee interactions. In the past few years however a number of researchers have explored task based group-testing procedure for oral interaction assessment. In the main these investigations [Gorman and Brooks 1986; Hutchinson 1986] report that the problems that were encountered were much less severe than is commonly anticipated, that the testees themselves respond well to this format, and that a crucial factor here is effective task design to ensure naturalness of language use, but within the standardising influence of task requirements. The language which can be elicited, can be at its best impressively spontaneous, and effective task focus can lead to reliable scoring procedures. One would expect to see extension of this work during the 90s. (Skehan 1991, p. 17)

The emphasis on subjective assessment of group interaction in our system is deliberate; through it we hope to promote the following:

- An assessment system integrated into the course, centered on the teacher, with an emphasis on feedback.

- Regular meaningful student interaction in the classroom— structured space that promotes fluency in what is being learned and the acquisition of discourse skills.

- Teacher evaluation of this "activity" in the classroom. Does everybody speak? If not, why not? Is the task challenging, meaning-focused, and interesting, or is it just mechanical?

- Regular teacher observation of the class as individuals trying to communicate—taking a step back to see what is actually going on.

- Exposure of teachers to criteria for quality of performance, to extend, challenge, stimulate discussion of the nature of proficiency, and improve the quality of teachers' professional judgments (not just for certification).

- Involvement of learners in an open assessment procedure, on their home ground. Videos can be discussed in terms of criteria that make the difference between one level of performance and another. The same approach can be used for writing.

- Involvement of teachers in refining the selection of tasks, the assessment instruments, and the feedback mechanisms.

Oral assessment often seems tacked on to the end of a test package. It is difficult to understand how developed countries (like Luxembourg) have managed until now without any formal oral tests at all, while developing countries like Zambia can introduce group interaction tests (Hilsdon 1991). It would certainly be a shame if future national language policies excluded or marginalized oral assessment. The high construct, washback, and face validity of group interaction should not be underestimated in deciding what mix of oral assessment to adopt.

2.4. How to Evaluate Performance

Speaking and writing can, of course, be directly observed, and quality of performance directly assessed. Listening and reading cannot be directly observed; only the trace of the performance, in responses to questions that can be marked, can be observed. Therefore, while speaking and writing tend to lend themselves to a *judging* strategy, listening and reading tend to lend themselves to a *counting* strategy:

> Since the listening and reading processes are not visible it is extremely difficult to judge them, to be able to describe in any way the quality of a listening or reading performance.... We are almost inevitably driven to a counting strategy in all but the most informal contexts, and are then able far more easily to describe the stimulus than the response. In the case of writing or speaking on the other hand, judging is natural, and it seems natural to give criteria of acceptability for a performance, so concentrating on the response rather than

> the stimulus.... But to "describe" levels of performance in listening and reading in similar qualitative terms as if we could actually see the processes in action seems to me to be verging on the dishonest. (Pollitt 1991, pp. 88–89)

Counting. As mentioned before, there are ways of converting marks to grades. Alderson (1991) identifies four classic ways of doing this, which can be combined to give a better result:

- calibrating the (listening or reading) test scores of every fifth or tenth candidate in rank order with the grade that person got in direct testing (Carroll 1980)—but calibrating a reading test with writing grades is odd, to say the least
- identifying the range of scores for candidates placed at each band by the test total (i.e., norm-referencing), if this is possible
- expert judgments (what score would you expect a Level 6 person to get on this test, what do you think a 50 percent or 80 percent score on this test would mean, what level is this person, what score did he or she get on the test)
- "piggybacking" from an existing test (plotting scores from the new test to scores from older tests taken by the same candidates)

Davies makes the point that at the end of the day the establishment of a "cutoff" score for each level is a value judgment, which needs adjusting to take account of the test user's experience of how it works. Davies is discussing traditional U.S.-style mastery/nonmastery decisions with criterion-referenced tests, but the point holds true in relation to levels on scales of proficiency as well: "Cronbach's words still hold good: 'setting a cutting score requires a value judgement' [1961, p. 335]. It is users of tests rather than test-constructors, who regard every test as criterion referenced. Pass marks properly should be determined by the test users themselves and they should always be related to local circumstances" (Davies 1988, p. 33).

Judging. Speaking and writing, which can be observed, present less of a problem because they can be judged. Teachers do this in every lesson, with every homework assignment. For a summative, product assessment, a system for directly judging performance needs the following:

- A procedure—a defined series of steps.
- Criteria—an explicit set of criteria for the degree of skill, the quality of performance, expected. As a minimum, the dimension represented by each point should be defined clearly; the degree of skill in this dimension should then be defined in detail for at least some if not all of the levels.
- A notation system—impression and/or analysis (grades or marks).

- A moderating system—rater training, standardization procedures.

Procedure. The main points of a procedure are to make sure things are done in a relatively standard fashion. Our oral assessment procedure requires assessors to note their impressions near the beginning of an activity (during an informal phase of collaborative activity), and then analyze performances with four criteria (RADIO: *range, accuracy, delivery,* and *interaction,* to arrive at an *overall* considered judgment based on comparing that initial impression with the result of the analysis) (North 1991, 1992a). Many systems involve specific phases designed to elicit different types of discourse and require assessors to allocate grades/marks at the end of each phase.

Criteria. Quality of performance is one of those areas, like academic discourse analysis, where everyone seems to create his or her own lists of categories. Here are some of the factors that appear in them:

RANGE
- Vocabulary range (length, size)
- Structural complexity

ACCURACY
- Accuracy
- Appropriacy

ORGANIZATION
- Textual cohesion
- Logical organization
- Text-type conventions

INTERACTION
- Social interaction
- Flexibility
- Intervention (speaking)

COMMUNICATION
- Message effectiveness
- Task completion

AUTONOMY
- Need for repetition
- Independence, initiative

Plus speaking only:

DELIVERY
- General delivery
- Fluency
- Hesitation

- Pronunciation
- Stress, rhythm
- Intonation

Obviously, there is a limit to the number of factors with which mere mortals can operate—hence the need for some kind of groupings, like those on the right, which still give seven major categories. Seven is still too many for live assessment, in my experience. A sensible number is three to five, and the headings finally chosen need to be transparent, intuitively clear, and reasonably consistent—if not constant—from task to task if teachers are to use them and to explain them effectively to learners.

Having explicit definitions of each criterion for each level offers a way to stimulate debate about what is being aimed at; to help teachers see which factors overinfluence their judgments; to train teachers to use the same criteria when they assess; to provide a reference point for negotiating differences of opinion over a performance; and to validate recorded samples in the terms of the descriptors.

Notation. Notation can be a relatively simple question of informed professional *judgments* in relation to a set of defined criteria, as long championed by Morrow. On the other hand, it can be a finicky arithmetical process, which often seems to me to be a flight to a spurious "objectivity." There is a range of possibilities between the two extremes. The following list is again incomplete, and systems combine approaches:

1. *Pure arithmetic:* 20 minus the number of mistakes; the number of lines minus or divided by the number of mistakes; the number of words spoken divided by the time taken to say them.

   These are not transparent systems. They sometimes have a logic that—while ingenious—seems misplaced, and they can be punitive and highly demotivating.

2. *Weighting scores:* 5 points for this, 3 points for that, 1 point for the other (sometimes). Repeat with different weighting for each question; criteria not defined.

   The disadvantage of this approach is that nothing is defined, so it is difficult to know whether people understand the same dimension by the criteria, or whether they understand the same standard for each point in the weighting system. Finally, one can argue for hours about the weighting, which often appears idiosyncratic.

3. *Global scores:* Scores out of 20 organized into bands 1–4, 5–7, 8–11, 12–15, and so on, with a brief definition of what each band means—a marking scale for the exam.

Used in several EFL exams, this approach works quite nicely and is easy for teachers to use, but even if all the raters understand the same thing by the dimension covered by a single holistic scale, there are no transparent criteria that you could explain to learners.

4. *Scoring criteria:* For example, 5 marks for each of 4 criteria, with the expected performance for each mark on each criterion defined with reference to the norm or pass "3"; add up and divide by 4 to get a score out of 20 that gives an overall grade.

   Used in a lot of oral exams, this method is transparent in that the criteria are fixed, are explicit, and can be explained to learners. It causes problems in the coherence between different examinations in the same series, since each isolated group of examiners norm-reference around the pass mark for their exam, without reference to the exam above or below.

5. *Rating criteria:* Criteria are defined for each level of a scale of proficiency; a band on the scale is allocated for each criterion separately, then averaged—sometimes with a certain feature getting an extra weighting.

   This is an approach commonly associated with scales of proficiency, including the Eurocentres one. Transparent and coherent, it has the advantage that it can yield a profile across the criteria for feedback. Some have thought that the results should *only* be given as a profile; Jones (1985) has compared the effect of averaging the grades to the mess you get by mixing cups of colored water, but there is the question of how watertight, and so how reliable, the judgments on the different criteria are: "One would expect, and indeed one gets, different performance on different dimensions (such that it is possible to get, say, 3 for appropriacy, and a 5 for content) and it is undesirable to add the scores on the separate dimensions together in order to arrive at some global assessment, because individual differences will be hidden in such a procedure: what is required is the reporting of some sort of profile. However, the question was raised of the independence of such dimensions, if not in reality, then at least in the ability of judges to rate independently. Cross contamination is quite likely, and only avoidable, if at all, by having different judges rate performances on different dimensions" (Alderson 1981, p. 61).

6. *Synthetic rating:* Rating directly onto the scale, or saying pass/fail, bearing in mind a set of four or six explicit criteria defined for each level, but without allocating any profile across the criteria.

   This is Morrow's approach (1986). It is straightforward, having no "woods and trees" problems with complicated arithmetic used to avoid making a professional judgment. It is pragmatic, too. With a complicated procedure and intricate weightings, whatever you do to try to ensure that the procedure is followed, the factors weighted, and the criteria considered, after a while teachers/examiners tend to ignore it all, or go through the motions

> retrospectively. "Experienced examiners in the FSI interview tend to use neither the definitions nor the rating sheet, and score according to their experience. They simply know what a 1+ or a 3+ is" (Jones 1985, p. 77).

Approaches 4, 5, and 6 all offer transparency: the possibility to give targeted feedback explaining success or failure, which can give direction to learning. There is, as Alderson says, a danger of cross-contamination in the rating of different factors, but this is not a serious disadvantage for giving feedback *during* the learning process. What is in any case more useful than just a grade for each criterion is a few particularly salient points to work on: "Your past tenses are a bit weak," "This is a phrase you can use to relate your contribution to one a few minutes ago," "You need to learn to distinguish the two *u* sounds in *coupure*." When two assessors are observing in terms of the criteria (common with group systems), one can concentrate mainly on grading, still noticing specific points, while the other can concentrate on points relevant to each criterion, still noting an impression. They can then negotiate the grades and enter them on the feedback form, which already has specific points for action related to the criteria.

Moderating. The approaches outlined above—with the exception of the first, pseudo-objective one—are intersubjective: they work through an informed professional judgment shared by the raters. The problem is to keep the subjectivity a shared one: people start going their own way as soon as the initial training is over. As Jones said, raters internalize the levels and then tend not to use the instruments. Teachers operating as raters with their own classes may be particularly prone to doing this.

Hence opting for a transparent, coherent form of criterion-referenced assessment implies a commitment to some checking mechanisms and some maintenance. Following are some simple checking mechanisms:

- anchoring the bands of proficiency to well-known benchmarks (e.g., examinations)
- providing a booklet and videocassette with official samples, graded according to the criteria
- using a second assessor—if not all the time, then for every tenth or hundredth, or for the top and bottom three, in each school/class, or for spot checks
- having a grade record-keeping form on which criteria (grades/scores) are entered, monitored by a local chief assessor

The maintenance can come from regular operation, making judgments with the criteria and giving feedback with reference to them, with occasional "moderating sessions" in which staff get together to rate samples, with occasional "team observing" in which teachers observe each others' classes together, and discuss the performances and ratings they have given in terms of the criteria.

3. INVOLVING LEARNERS

Quite a lot has been said in passing about the way a transparent criterion-based approach to assessment can involve the learners, and hence improve motivation. If assessment is not a magic "black box," learners can be involved in the process if they want to be, and if the teacher wants them to be. Perhaps nothing is more motivating than being involved—if you want to be involved.

Involving students in the assessment process is not a yes/no question, Shall we have self-assessment? Rather, it is a continuum of options or stages of involvement that can be selected according to context:

Informing the learners—telling them, for example:

- their level, how they stand
- what they will be able to do at the end
- when there will be tests
- what the test will be for
- what it will be on
- what it will be like
- how well they did, what was good, what they need to think about

Asking them for reactions—for example:

- what they thought of the activity or test
- which parts they had difficulty with
- when they were stuck for words
- what things they would like to go over again

Training them in criteria—what quality means:

- using codes to mark written work (at first underlining, coding, and correcting; then underlining and coding for the learner to correct; then underlining only; then just indicating a mistake somewhere—in all cases, monitoring the corrections)

- explaining the criteria used to judge spoken and written performance (perhaps eliciting points by looking at a short three- to eight-minute video or a sample script, then grouping them into the criteria used in the system)
- comparing videos/scripts (which is better and why?), first with the teacher, then in pairs (in our experience, it is best to use neutral examples here, not examples from the class in question)

Involving them in choices and judgments:

- in selection of the activity (choice of topic and type)
- in writing the test (groups look at what has been covered, then write questions, and the teacher takes questions from all groups to produce the class test)
- in monitoring peer performance on video (class looking at specific points in a short extract, groups looking for different criteria—*positive* performances as well as problems)
- in judging class level in relation to definitions and samples (Eurocentre Paris use samples of famous foreigners talking in French for this)
- in self-assessment (of their overall level, of their performance on a particular task)

As can be seen from this list, self-assessment is not the only way of involving learners in the assessment process; there are a number of steps on the way to self-direction. How many steps taken is a question of philosophy, resources, training, and temperament. But there is very little excuse for taking no steps at all, and an educational approach should be designed so that it encourages rather than discourages this process.

It is perhaps worth recalling the advantages of self-assessment, and some of the techniques that can be used, many of which—like many of those listed above—are quite modest. Von Elek summarizes the advantages of self-assessment, saying that it encourages learners

> 1) to assume greater responsibility in the evaluation of their proficiency and progress; 2) to diagnose their weak areas and obtain a realistic view of their general proficiency as well as their skills profile; 3) to see their actual proficiency in relation to the level they wish to achieve in order to qualify for a certain job or training program, and consequently, 4) to become more motivated and goal orientated in their further studies. (von Elek 1985)

Self-assessment does not just mean placing yourself on a scale, which is merely one of many possible types of procedure. Among the procedures listed by Oscarson (1989) and others are these:

- assessment in groups or pairs
- informal self-assessment in an authentic project task in the real world (fieldwork)
- self-marked tests with keys, record cards, or checklists of graded objectives at the appropriate level, with a learner, peer, and teacher column to be checked off (like OCEA circles for coloring in)
- "progress videos" (start/middle/end of course)
- a questionnaire (rating scale) on a particular skill, expressed "I can...," on which the learner indicates the level he or she agrees corresponds with his or her achievement
- continuous assessment cards: entry for each task with (1) a self-assessment comment, (2) a teacher grade, and (3) a teacher comment
- diaries and logbooks (Oscarson 1989)

Many proponents of self-assessment make the point that it "works" in terms of increasing learning even if it "doesn't work" in terms of assessment. Oscarson himself sees it more as a formative instrument:

> I should like to point out that my discussion relates primarily to such assessment as has a bearing on the learning situation, i.e. assessment for formative purposes, in an organized form or as a self managed activity. It does not relate, generally speaking, to assessment undertaken for purposes such as selection, grading and certification. I would like to add this: self assessment as a technique for selection in the narrow sense of placement is a real possibility, as has been convincingly demonstrated by Le Blanc and Painchaud [1985] (Oscarson 1989, p. 2)

In fact, a number of studies apart from von Elek and Le Blanc and Painchaud have been reported that correlate self-assessment to other measures of proficiency (including Oscarson 1981; Wangstorn 1981; Janssen-Van Dieten 1989; Bachman and Palmer 1989; and Paltridge 1989). The general lesson to be learned from all of them is that people are better at it than we sometimes think: self-assessment can yield correlations to teacher ranking for "general proficiency" of between 0.65 and 0.80. The second point that seems significant to me is that people may be best at assessing their listening and speaking ability—their ability to communicate, to interact. And most crucially, people seem better at assessing performance in relation to a specific test or task, in relation to difficulties they had, than at global placement on an abstract scale.

At the risk of ending on a pessimistic note, however, I should point out that a self-assessment placement program set up after the Le Blanc and Painchaud study has recently been reevaluated. The system was successful "in the context of a programme in which students prepared at their own rate to pass the University's second language proficiency test for graduation"; but in the context of a four-level lockstep comprehension program with registration by mail on the basis of self-assessment and with cutoff scores provided to the prospective student with the self-assessment instrument, the system led to 75 percent misplacement in the two lower levels (which carried no academic credit) and 40 percent misplacement in the two upper levels in comparison with a standardized placement test (Ready-Morfitt 1991). In other words, whether people are capable of accurate, honest self-assessment and whether they practice it may be two different things; if the self-assessment is purely instrumental and if they can see themselves being disadvantaged as a result of honesty, why should they be honest?

4. CONCLUSION

One way of harnessing the potential motivating effects of self-assessment listed by von Elek might be to offer regular opportunities for criterion-referenced assessment of group interaction, as discussed above.

In the short term, learners and teachers are more probably interested in "What I need" feedback in relation to the criteria in order to improve performance. In the medium term, however, learners probably need "Where I am" feedback in order to get the perspective necessary to take more responsibility and to become more goal-oriented. Seeing performance in relation to a scale of language proficiency that refers to language activities in the real world may help in this process—particularly if the learners are learning in their own country without much opportunity for practical self-assessment in authentic real-life tasks.

A national scale of proficiency linking specifications for content, specifications for degrees of skill in performance and reporting statements—possibly coming in the form of a set of overlapping miniscales oriented around the norm of what can be expected from particular groups, and probably skewed to the bottom so as to value achievement at low levels—could offer a number of advantages.

First, and most obviously, it could offer a yardstick to relate the different sectors of a system together, and to relate a national system to international and other national systems. Second, it could provide an educational framework to encourage an openness in assessment, promoting among teachers a deeper understanding of the nature of proficiency and providing a metalanguage for discussing it. Third, through the exploitation of different formats for presenting information in the scales and specifications, it could offer instruments to encourage the involvement of learners in the assessment process, thus enabling them to see where they are, to monitor their own progress, to develop feelings of success, and to acquire the motivation necessary for them to sustain that progress and to continue learning languages after the end of their current education cycle.

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TESTING AND EXAMINATIONS IN A NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE POLICY

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1. FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTION 1: NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE POLICY

A logical if perhaps elementary way to deal with the issue buried in the mundane but challenging title of my paper is to attempt to define its parts. I start with the assumption that a National (Foreign) Language Policy consists of at least:

1. a list of designated languages

2. for each language, a statement of national needs and goals, definable as kinds (or, some might argue, levels) of ability (e.g. ability to translate documents, ability to interpret in face-to-face meetings, ability to read documents, ability to understand formal public speech; if levels, then for each ability some appropriate scale is added like "minimally, fluently, perfectly")

3. for each language, the number of people who should have these abilities (at defined levels) under defined circumstances (e.g. if trade is to be increased)

4. similarly, for each language, an estimate of the resources (the people with each kind of stated ability) that are at present available or being produced by various means (public and private education, immigration, visits abroad)

5. a priority for moving from the present (4) to the desired (3) situation with an estimate of the cost or of the changes in allocations required for this

6. a set of implementation strategies or plans to carry out the desired change (5)

Testing and examinations are directly relevant to determining levels and kinds of ability (3 and 4) and to helping in implementation (5). Having accepted this relevance, I want in this paper to show some of the limitations that need to be taken into account, then to suggest a way of working within them.

2. FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTION 2: LANGUAGE TESTS

What sort of speech act is an examination question? A normal conversational question, Searle (1969) said, is an attempt to obtain direct information that the speaker does not have but has a right to, from an interlocutor who may reasonably be expected to know the answer. In the course of an instructional procedure, such a question might take the form, "Do you understand what I am telling you?" or even, "Do you remember what I told you last time?" Examination questions don't fit this pattern, for it is normally the case that the speaker knows the answer; the focus is on establishing whether the interlocutor does also. Questions of this kind are not so much requests for information as requests to perform. These performances may be needed for various purposes, depending on the goal of the examiner.

One goal of tests and examinations—a goal that is so intimately associated with the pedagogical process as to require no other argument for it—is to check on the progress of learning. This purely pedagogical test, whether given at the beginning of a learning session to see what needs to be taught and to predict areas of difficulty, or given during learning to see how much progress has been made, is a natural concomitant of even the most informal method of teaching and learning. The good learner is one who constantly tests and examines his or her changing skill or knowledge; the good teacher is one who continually pays attention to the learner to be sure that successful learning is taking place. A purely pedagogical test, then, is any form of testing used by a teacher or learner to check on the learner's progress in order to modify the course or nature of instruction.

But there are many other uses besides this. Even in the closed pedagogical situation, a test may be used with the alternative or additional purpose of motivating or punishing or classifying or grading a student. Fundamental to this "enriched"—and at the same time impoverished—use of tests is an uneven power relation. In the purely pedagogical test that I described, learner and teacher are in a mutual relationship where the only difference between them is that the teacher has some special knowledge or skill that the learner wishes to obtain. The ideal case for this is where the learning is being undertaken for its own sake. But in many societies the formal context for learning is socially unequal, with the teacher often required to force learning on the unwilling learner. One use of a test, then, is to motivate or discipline or otherwise control the learner.

There is also another appropriate use of tests and examinations that is sufficiently obvious and natural to be considered "pure" and unarguable, and that is the germane investigation of an individual who is seeking recognition as being qualified for some role. This pure qualification test, whether of a doctor seeking to practice or a pilot wishing to fly or a person offering marriage, is in its simplest sense the result of an agreement between two individuals, one of whom is offering the service and one of whom is considering its use, that the former will offer some evidence before being judged as qualified. A pure qualification test is any germane testing of an individual who claims qualifications to perform certain services for another individual.

Again, in real situations there can be questions about what is "germane"; are the political opinions of a person who offers to mow my lawn or repair my watch relevant? And again, in more formally developed systems, there is an obvious tendency to use tests and examinations to restrict entrance to lucrative occupations, or to exert power over certain members of the population.

3. TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS: THE ENCROACHING POWER

But tests have much wider uses that these two "pure" ones, for they exist in the context of complex and dynamic societies. They are the "encroaching power" that can revolutionize education, as Latham (1877, p. 2) pointed out. Ever since the Middle Ages (at least) they have been used to control schools from outside. Madaus and Kellaghan (1992) described a medieval language test, a viva voce examination with such a purpose. Under the terms of a contract between the city elders of Treviso and the schoolmaster, the latter's salary depended on the pupils' level of attainment. The master received half a ducat for each student who showed proficiency in the alphabet and two ducats for each one who succeeded in stylistic exercises. Madaus and Kellaghan cited this as the first recorded instance of employing the "technology of testing" for the purposes of establishing centralized control of an educational system.

There were similar uses in revolutionary France, where examinations continued to grow in importance after the Revolution. In 1795 an entrance examination for teachers' colleges was established (Madaus and Kellaghan 1992). Under Napoleon examinations became the method of controlling a centralized educational system, with the introduction in 1808 of the *baccalauréat*, used to admit students to a university-level school or faculty, to the *grandes écoles*—which by midcentury had their own competitive entrance examinations—and to government service.

In America too the controlling role was early recognized. At Harvard, examinations are almost as old as the university, Buck (1964) wrote in a history of their use. He cited the 1650 statute that required an oral examination: four hours a day, twice a week, for three weeks in late spring, all but first-year students were required "to sit in the Hall to bee examined by all Commers in the Latine, Greek and Hebrew tongues and in Rhetoricke, Logike and Physicke" (p. 5).[1] Five years later only seniors were required to attend. In 1790 detailed regulations were set out for public examinations to be conducted by professors and tutors "in the presence of a joint Committee of the Corporation and Overseers" (p. 7). During the first half of the nineteenth century the oral examinations continued with a number of modifications. In 1857, however, reflecting concern over the problems of oral examining, a committee of four overseers and four faculty members recommended replacing it with written examinations, and in March the overseers accepted the proposal to establish annual written examinations, set and marked by the instructors but approved in advance by committees appointed by the overseers. In 1869 degrees were made dependent on having passed examinations; in 1870 an elective system was introduced and honors recognized. By the end of the century, then, the notion of examinations in courses was established, but continuing dissatisfaction led to a 1909 proposal to supplement course tests by a general examination "designed to measure intellectual power and grasp of a subject"; such a test was implemented gradually between 1909 and 1927 (Buck 1964, p. 19).

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[1] This model is not unlike the Treviso one described above: a method of the city elders to keep an eye on the progress of the educational system they were paying for.

The city elders' interest went beyond Harvard. Beginning in 1709 the town of Boston began the practice of sending "a certain number of Gentlemen of Liberal Education, Together with some of the Revd. Ministers of the Town," to visit the school and examine methods and proficiency; this was formalized by the Massachusetts Act of 1789. These public examinations, Kandel (1936) reports, continued to the middle of the nineteenth century, tending to become "public displays" to show off the best pupils.

To this point the model was close to the Treviso example. Written examinations entered the Boston public system a little earlier than at Harvard, introduced in 1845 by Horace Mann, superintendent of instruction for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "for bureaucratic accountability and political purposes" (Madaus and Kellaghan 1992, p. 27). Mann pointed out that the oral examinations were inefficient and lacked standardization. He also planned to publish analyses of student work to show the results of "imperfect teaching" and to use in his struggles with some headmasters who were opposing his ideas (Madaus 1990). They quickly spread throughout the United States and were used for decisions on promotion too.

4. TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS: WHO SHALL GOVERN THE COLONIES?

Important as they were in the external control of educational systems, tests and examinations also came to play a major role in the selection of people for sponsored occupations.

The purely pedagogical tests and examinations that accompanied classroom teaching were combined with qualification tests in the late medieval universities, as examinations became the method of determining the award of degrees. In both France and Prussia examinations developed further in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries into methods of selection of civil servants and control over the educational process. This new emphasis, Madaus (1990) believes, was an idea that the Jesuits had brought back to France from China.

During the Han Dynasty (201 B.C. to A.D. 8) a system of examinations for the selection of civil servants was begun; the system became open to all who were qualified during the Sung Dynasty, and it took its final shape during the Ming. The Chinese civil service examinations required candidates to write on Confucian doctrine, demonstrating mastery of the classics. To avoid corruption, all essays were marked anonymously, and the final (highest) level of the examinations was under the personal supervision of the emperor.

The first Western scholar to give a detailed (and admiring) account of the Chinese system was the Jesuit explorer and missionary Matteo Ricci (1942). French philosophes like Voltaire and Turgot quoted the example of these competitive examinations to attack privilege and patronage in political appointments in contemporary France. The original purpose of the Chinese examinations was to find a way of replacing patronage: their effect was to develop a class of intellectual—but not necessarily effective—magistrates and governors. The Jesuits, who learned about the system through their work in China, introduced written examinations into France in the sixteenth century (Madaus and Kellaghan 1992).

The system of examinations spread from the Catholic schools to secular institutions and became increasingly significant. In France, Anderson (1975) reports, the *agrégation* was introduced as a competitive examination for selecting teachers in 1766; the *concours générale,* a prize competition for the Parisian *lycées,* dates from 1747.

In Prussia examinations were used not just to control schools, but also to select civil servants. The first such examinations were given in 1827, and they reached their "classic form" by 1834 (McClelland 1980). The selection examinations were administered by a Supreme Examination Council consisting of senior civil servants, whose emphasis was on professional juridical training. Only at the end of the century did university teachers gain control over the council. The examinations were taken after university training, and again after in-service experience, and had to be passed in order to obtain a first regular appointment. A combination of strong competition for positions and very rigorous examinations based on practical law rather than on theory gave a special nature to these examinations.

Examinations could offer a solution to the problems of finding men to govern India from England, Thomas Macaulay argued. In a speech in the House of Commons on July 10, 1833, on the East India Company Bill in support of the use of competitive examinations for selection of the Indian senior civil service, Macaulay made this connection clear:

> It is proposed that for every vacancy in the civil service four candidates shall be named, and the best candidate selected by examination. We conceive that, under this system, the persons sent out will be young men above par—young men superior either in talents or in diligence to the mass. It is said, I know, that examinations in Latin, in Greek, and in mathematics are not tests of what men will prove to be in life. I am perfectly aware they are not infallible tests; but that they are tests I confidently maintain. Look at every walk of life—at this House—at the other House—at the bar—at the bench—at the Church—and see whether it be not true that those who attain high distinction in the world were generally men who were distinguished in their academic career. (Hansard 1833, p. 525; rpt. as Macaulay 1853, 1:185)

The example of the Indian civil service took some years to be emulated in selection for the home civil service, first because of the fact that for India the recruitment was only for senior positions, while at home all levels would be involved, and second because of the much greater importance of patronage. Competitive examinations were offered in the 1860s, but not widely required, until Gladstone's Order-in-Council of 1870, which established open competition by examination for a large number of positions. By 1882 examinations were fair game for public comment, as the following stanza from a Gilbert and Sullivan opera shows:

> Peers shall teem in Christendom,
> And a Duke's exalted station
> Be attainable by Com-
> Petitive Examination! (W. S. Gilbert, *Iolanthe,* 1882)

As Madaus (1990, p. 3) summarized the situation, "Tests are a social technology, and historically are mechanisms of control and power deeply embedded in education, government, and business." In order to understand tests, then, we need always to be concerned not just with form but with use; the nature of our study, then, must be as Latham (1877, p. iii) expressed it, to inquire "as to what we want to effect by Examination and how far we can succeed."

5. UNAVOIDABLE UNCERTAINTY

So far so good. If examinations can really do all that has been asked of them, the relevance of tests for a National Foreign Language Policy would seem obvious and simple. Let us develop tests for each of the designated languages that will assess individual levels of ability—and so determine resources as defined earlier—and drive the educational system to produce needed resources. That this was a mistaken course to follow was perceived by Carl Brigham, the man who spent much of his career developing the Scholastic Aptitude Tests and educating the distinguished scholars and scholarly administrators who sat on the College Entrance Examination Board about the basic principles of psychometrics.

The College Entrance Examination Board had always recognized, as the secretary's report in 1929 made clear (College Entrance Examination Board 1929, p. 6), the need not to "hamper the independence and initiative of individual teachers" by allowing its examinations to become too firmly set. They wanted to permit a candidate to show understanding and power of expression, and not just "test his ability to reproduce in a more or less mechanical manner bits of information imparted to him by a drillmaster." By avoiding precise prescription of requirements or of the nature of the examinations and by regularly changing the membership of examining committees, the board hoped "to facilitate variations in the form of its examinations and to give suitable recognition to the different shades of opinion that exist among American scholars and teachers." When some teachers were upset that an examination had been changed without notice, they were chided by the secretary that "an examination would be quite worthless if it were reduced to a ceremony for which candidates could be prepared by a series of rehearsals."

Given these quite liberal and humanistic views of the examiners, one can readily guess the uphill battle that Brigham, the board's new associate secretary—and a professor of psychology at Princeton—faced in trying to convince the board of new psychometric truths. In the 1933 report (College Entrance Examination Board 1933) he drew the board's attention to its two "partially incompatible" purposes, the one to control institutions and the other to measure individuals. The board's "definitions of requirements" had been questioned by some teachers as interfering with the schools' freedom of action and with experimentation; this could be handled by writing requirements more generally. But there was another area of conflict, where these requirements appeared to "collide with the nature and composition of the examination papers."

To help explain this paradox, Brigham went on to explain the statistical notion of correlation and to raise the question of the predictive validity of the board's examinations, which, he believed, should be studied. He told the board about the issue of the unreliability of measuring devices, a problem that testers had long been aware of, so that they thought of a grade not as a fixed point but rather as "one particular grade drawn by chance from a hat which contains all of that candidate's grades obtained from an infinite series of examinations set and read to measure exactly that same trait." Unlike the colleges, which acted as though a reported grade were an exact and fixed number, testers saw it surrounded by its standard error, "which would include two-thirds of the grades above and below it." The purpose of the "new-type" movement was essentially to reduce this error and so to rate an *individual* more fairly. To testers with this aim, concern for control of the curriculum would be "heretical."

The board's examiners, however, considered it their duty "to exercise a benevolent control over the curriculum." From this point of view, questions should be included in the examination simply because schools must train students to answer them. But such questions, Brigham said, were often quite unsuitable to "describe an *individual* with a respectable minimum of variation in rating."

Why this was so had in fact been known for some time. The triumph of competitive examination at the end of the nineteenth century and the general acceptance of its usefulness in controlling education—and, even more, in democratic selection for employment—allowed attention to be focused on the technology itself. One critical issue, first recognized from the beginning of the Chinese examinations, was the problem of assuring fairness: How could one avoid unfair manipulation of the system that favored certain candidates over others? But fairness remained a somewhat nebulous topic until the quantification of test results permitted more formal analysis and demonstration.

Quantification invaded examinations with the birth of the notion of giving numerical marks rather than simply identifying the level or class of a student or his performance. The idea of awarding partial marks for different items in a test and then adding them up to provide a total is attributed by Madaus (1990) to William Farish, so that qualitative scoring "yielded to the precision tool of the mark." Quantitative scores, Madaus pointed out, could "accumulate and aggregate student marks, organize them, rank them, classify them, form categories, determine averages, fix norms, describe groups, compare results across units of aggregation, and fix individuals and groups in population distribution" (p. 21). It was looking at the numbers produced in this way that led to the major attack on the reliability—and, by implication, the fairness—of what had become by the end of the nineteenth century the normal or traditional method of examining.

The first published consideration of the effect of error on examinations had been in a paper read by Professor Edgeworth to the Royal Statistical Society in 1888 in which he proposed that the generally accepted view that an examination was no more than a rough test of merit could be made more precise by application of a part of probability theory, the theory of errors. Physicists had established the existence of error in measuring time, distance, and weight. Any series of measures had been shown to deviate from the correct measure in a regular fashion, so that small deviations were more common than larger ones; the resulting observations formed what, he said, "a lively French statistician" had presented as the *gens d'armes'* hat.

The assumption, Edgeworth said, was that the highest point showed the true measure. The application to examinations followed: "Now there is reason to believe that a similar grouping of divergent estimates prevails when we are weighing—not physical mass—but intellectual worth" (p. 601). Thus, in marking a Latin prose, one might expect the marks given by different examiners to deviate in the same way, clustering around a midpoint. In physics it was possible to check the correct weight with an atomic balance; in "intellectual ponderation" one must rely on a Standard of Taste, so that the "mean judgment of competent critics" was the true score, and any deviations were errors. In a footnote Edgeworth distinguished between this "fortuitous deviation from an ideal mean" and avoidable (or clerical) mistakes. The truth emerged from these errors: "By the cumulation of erroneous observations, it is possible to approximate to the truth" (p. 602).

Edgeworth went on to calculate what happened in a typical examination. Variations resulting from the fluctuating health of the candidate or the special suitability of the questions were left out; the variation was assumed to be in the examiners' readings. The first cause of error he noted was the existence of a *minimum sensibile*, the limit in the number of degrees of quality that any human being could perceive, as Galton (1883) had noted. For this Edgeworth estimated 5 percent, namely, the difference of one point on a twenty-point scale. He then looked at idiosyncrasies of the examiner, referring to a variation of 13 percent he had observed between his marks and those of a colleague. Even allowing for the control provided by chief examiners, he assumed an error of 5 percent, citing in a footnote a number of cases of much larger variation. His paper included a study of some English language papers, some marked hastily and others more slowly, showing the error effect from this too. He estimated, then, a total 2 percent error. When the actual error was calculated for some candidates who were marked by different examiners, the error turned out to be higher, 3.5 percent. Further error, Edgeworth said, would be attributable to the sampling effect, the assumption that the sample in the examination represented the universe of knowledge being tested. His paper concluded by noting that a proportion of candidates were awarded honors by chance. He had no simple solution to offer to this problem, but concluded that a public examination is "a sort of lottery" in which "the chances are better for the more deserving.... It is a species of sortition infinitely preferable to the ancient method of casting lots for honours and offices" (p. 626).

6. CONTROL OR MEASURE

The problem, as Brigham pointed out to the College Board members some sixty years ago, was that if one was to reduce the error to a reasonable amount so that individual decisions were reasonably fair, one had to give up on the concurrent aim of controlling the curriculum. The psychometrists for their part were ready to do this, even at the cost of having to ignore, and temporarily stifle, the anguished cries of those who pointed out that the tests they came up with may have been "fair" but certainly seemed irrelevant. Writing in 1934 (College Entrance Examination Board 1934), Brigham recounted attempts that had been made to overcome what Hopkins (1921)—an educator from Harvard who had studied the unreliability of essay grading—categorized as "an unwarranted condition" by writing "new-type or objective" tests of items of grammar or spelling or vocabulary. Items like these, Brigham commented, were "silly"; when you tested only what could be tested reliably, you did not measure "English."

The two solutions to Edgeworth's problem assumed the need to obtain as many measures as possible and then average them. The cheap solution was to ask a large number of simple questions; the more expensive one was to ask a large number of people to evaluate a smaller number of performances. The first is the psychometrists' preferred solution, and the basis of the objective test. The first person to develop objective testing, if we accept the claim of Ruch and Stoddard (1927), was J. M. Rice, who in 1894–95 suggested that spelling could be measured objectively by presenting students with a list of words to spell, and awarding them a score based on the number of correct answers they gave. He also proposed tests in arithmetic and language but did not attempt to standardize them. Ten years later Thorndike (1904), in a textbook for the social sciences and education on measurement, drew attention to the problem of deciding what were the units of measurement in a test. Thorndike thought that Rice had been wrong to give a single point to each answer to a spelling test without considering the variation in difficulty between the items. Accepting, like psychometrists before and after him, the principle of normal distribution of the various traits that could be measured—and he believed that "any mental trait in any individual is a variable quantity" (p. 22)—he proposed rather the use of scales as the best method of resolving the problem.

The handwriting scale that Thorndike developed—which has good claims to be the first standardized test—was published a few years later (Thorndike 1910). In the process of developing it he had collected a thousand samples of writing, from the worst to the best, from pupils in grades 5 to 8. Thirty judges ranked the samples, and after careful selection and reranking, a number were chosen to form the scale, ranging from 0 to 18. By looking at this scaled group of samples, a judge could determine what mark to give to any new case. Separate scales were developed for adults, and the scales were used to compare the level of achievement of different schools. Scales of this kind were developed for foreign language composition testing as part of the Modern Language Study (Henmon 1929); they are basically what is used now to train graders of oral and written performances.

The psychometrists' dream, in the search for the Holy Scale, has long been to find a set of testing items that will turn out to be ranked on an absolute zero-based scale. A quarter of a century after he developed his first scale, Thorndike was still optimistic. At the third of three conferences sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation between the world wars to repatriate to Europe Edgeworth's ideas of reliability (Monroe 1939), Thorndike discussed his vision of a perfect language test. Not much could be done to the content of traditional examinations—examining boards were already composed of "able and conscientious persons"—but the fairness could be improved by increasing the number of readers. In borderline cases, or where marks were published, each examination should be rated by two sets of examiners, working independently with a full range of papers. He disapproved strongly of the idea of having examiners confer:

> In general all procedures designed to cause examiners to agree more closely with one another are very dangerous. They are likely to favor a conventional orthodox system of ratings which may penalize candidates who are notably original, subtle, or eccentric. Efforts should be directed rather toward causing each examiner to use all the good judgment he has and to agree more closely with the truth. (Monroe 1939, p. 242)

Discussions between examiners before marking, then, should be concerned with arriving not at agreement but at "the truth."

More substantial improvement could only be achieved, Thorndike thought, through using objectively scorable new-type examinations. A key quality of a good objective test was its "purity," its ability to measure just one ability at a time. Sometimes one might want an adulterated test, such as an examination in mathematics that was "contaminated" by intelligence, but it would be preferable to have two unadulterated scores and then decide later how to weight them. Similarly, Thorndike believed it would be valuable to develop modern language tests that concentrated on the bits of knowledge that made up language—words, phrases, even sentences—rather than connected prose, which calls for intelligence to treat as a whole. While essay and letter writing might be closer to life than objective test items, the measure provided is not purely linguistic.

Students of mental measurement, Thorndike went on, were agreed on the need for an equal-unit scale running from zero up to as high a point as needed to be measured. He believed this could be done for language ability: "A graded series of tasks in German can be arranged so that any person who succeeds with task *n* in order can be guaranteed to succeed with task n1, n2, n3, etc." While the German scale might never be perfect, it would have valuable attributes. He believed the first such examination could be developed by testing 2,000 to 3,000 persons, each with 1,000 to 5,000 items, and would require about 2,000 hours of work by an expert with 6,000 hours of routine assistance. Such examinations would be costly, and he could understand why Dr. Ben Wood and others were spending their time on objective scoring rather than on the equalization of units. But even having such an examination might not lead to it being used: "The authorities in control of examinations are in general not interested in the fundamental veracity of examination measures." They would be unlikely to become enthusiastic about absolute scores of language proficiency; he wondered if even the "expert and progressive group" to whom he was reading the paper would agree with him.

In the discussion that followed, Thorndike did find doubters. Auguste Desclos, the head of the French committee and director of the Collège Franco-Britannique in Paris, raised basic questions about the notion of "absolute knowledge" of a language. What would it be? How would it work in pronunciation, with the different standards? Even the BBC could not agree between London and Oxford standard English! Desclos found it difficult to imagine absolute measurement of language knowledge, or of other imponderable values. Thorndike agreed. At the higher levels with language, measurement would not be possible; only at the levels of ability with which schools were concerned could it be done. At higher levels how could one deal, for instance, with the eight hundred thousand terms used in English as names of animals? Similarly with pronunciation: one could make excellent recordings and compare them with standards. There would be uniformity on the lower levels, as when nobody could tell whether it was "English or Chinook," but at higher levels there would have to be separate scales for Eastern Seaboard English or General American English or Oxford English, all of which are sociologically defensible.

The notion of a zero level was brought up again; zero level in a foreign language would surely vary, it was suggested, in such matters as preparedness and previous experience. Thorndike found the point interesting, but he did not think that his scale needed to include aptitude or intelligence. He was asked about how the scale would handle the differences between a child who had learned some German while on holiday in Germany and one who had learned German in school. Thorndike was fairly sure that it would work with reading ability; he imagined that it would be possible to reach a balance, as had been done with the old Binet examination, where the scale was not absolute. No mental scale was absolute in this, but statistically it was possible to treat it as absolute.

In the final exchange of a session that was prolonged beyond the normal hour, Desclos asked if the scale would include more than vocabulary. Thorndike assured him that it would include "the relations, the syntax, word order, and all that sort of thing." Knowledge of French, he conceded, was not something like space of which you simply had more or less, but it was near enough for the purpose of building a scale. The scale would be formed of levels of difficulty, but each level would not be identical. In reply to a question, Thorndike said that if his courage were good, he would make a scale when he retired in 1940. I have found no evidence that he did.

7. OF SCALES AND SCALES

I have taken this time to present Thorndike's views and the ensuing discussion at the Dinard conference because of the very important points it makes relevant to our concerns here. First, it is important to note that Thorndike did not expect the kind of scale he was thinking about to be relevant or workable beyond the elementary level. While he did not consider the objections concerning differences in standards for pronunciation or even in the results of formal and informal learning to be significant at these stages, it is quite clear, from his reference to the area of vocabulary which he knew so well, that he realized that any discrete-point-based absolute scale would quickly tear itself apart when it moved to deal with topical and domain differences.

If we read Thorndike carefully, it is also clear that the kind of absolute scale he was dreaming about was completely different from the scales that developed in imitation of the U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Institute scales (Jones 1979; Rice 1959; Sollenberger 1978; Wilds 1975). While absolute in the sense that they started from a zero level, there was never any pretense in these scales of providing equal-unit intervals; rather, they aimed at devising a method that would help develop a register of government officials who had skills or background knowledge and experience in foreign areas and languages.

Some of the thinking that went into these developments can be understood from a paper written by John Carroll in 1954 but never published. After a general survey of the history and state of the art of language testing, Carroll (1954) continued by considering some of the special problems that had been found. The first concerned content: How could an achievement test in vocabulary or lexicon not be seriously influenced by the specific training the students had received? Frequency counts would seem to be the answer, but they tended to be based on literary texts. Perhaps a semantically or conceptually based frequency count would be the answer, or using a count of the frequency of topics dealt with in elementary textbooks. It will be seen that in this hope Carroll, ignoring Thorndike, was drawn to the possibility of finding a curriculum-independent scale of vocabulary.

The scales that did exist were normed only in terms of percentiles; none of the standardized tests offered "any information which would help in gauging what kinds of scores would signify near-native proficiency, what scores would signify minimal ability to conduct routine affairs in a foreign country, etc." (Carroll 1954, p. 45). Carroll was already starting to think about the need for absolute language scales ("quasi-absolute" was his term) of the sort that the Foreign Service Institute was to develop. He cited the scale proposed by Sandri and Kaulfers (1945)—the same scale had been presented in Kaulfers (1944)—favorably as "a step in the right direction," although probably wrong in assuming language to be a "unitary trait"; rather, scales for different aspects would be needed.

Carroll described two methods of developing absolute scales, one by arranging performances along a difficulty scale and the other by seeking normative values for native speakers. Or French tests standardized on native speakers might be tried on English learners of French. Percentile scales of standardized achievement tests tell nothing about what a score means. "For none of these standardized tests have I ever seen any information which would help in gauging what kind of scores would signify near-native proficiency, what scores would signify minimal ability to conduct routine affairs in a foreign country, etc." (Carroll 1954, p. 45). Nor, with the exception of a thesis by Villareal (1947), had any of the foreign language tests been administered to native speakers of the language. But quasi-absolute standards were necessary. There had been attempts at absolute measurement of vocabulary. Also, Sandri and Kaulfers (1945) had offered an interpretive scale for their Italian auditory comprehension test, ranging from "Cannot understand the spoken language" through three other levels to "Can understand popular talks, talking-pictures, ordinary telephone conversations, and minor dialectual [sic] variations without obvious difficulty as well as detect departures from normal usage." It is noteworthy also that the center point on the Sandri and Kaulfers scale referred to "routine transactions involved in independent travel abroad."

In his 1954 notes Carroll proposed a number of approaches. One would be to establish a difficulty scale—like the mental maturity scale of the Binet intelligence test—and seek expert interpretation of the meaning of the points. Another would be to norm the test on native speakers, so that one might say that a certain score is equivalent to the average achievement of third-grade native children. For oral production Carroll recommended developing a "controlled conversation" modeled along the lines of Sandri and Kaulfers (1945), where examinees were instructed in English to tell an Italian to do something.

In the course of conversations with Carroll, Sollenberger (1978) reported, the scale originally suggested for the Foreign Service Institute was modified. The symbol L was changed to S, for speaking; R remained the symbol for the reading scale; and each scale was divided into six levels, from 0 to 5. This system, Sollenberger said, became part of the institute jargon, since for the first time it furnished "officially approved performance and criterion-based definitions" for teachers, testers, and test users. Wilds (1975) considered that the system was usable by 1956; Sollenberger detailed some of the growing pains, with standards said to vary from language to language—it was said to be harder to obtain an S-3 in French than in less common languages. Raters were believed to favor their own students, and to be influenced by the rank and age of the person into giving a "compassionate" S-3. There was also concern about the influence of personality.

To overcome these problems before mandatory testing began in 1957, Frank A. Rice (a linguist) was appointed to head an independent testing unit; Claudia Wilds (a former student of John Carroll's) was appointed his assistant. This unit quickly developed a checklist for the S rating, consisting of five "performance factors": accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Each was subdivided into a six-point scale labeled with two appropriate polar terms: accent from foreign to native, comprehension from incomplete to complete.[2] In the first published description of the oral interview, Rice (1959) explained that the checklist was intended to "counterbalance the inherent subjectivity of the testing procedure." Wilds (1975) said that it was also intended to make sure that examiners considered each of the factors. Rice believed it also permitted showing the high degree of statistical consistency of the judges. After she became head of the testing unit in 1953, Wilds developed a weighted scoring, which was derived by multiple correlation with the overall scoring. In fact, as Wilds says (1975, p. 32), judges were required to complete the checklist but not to compute its results, because they felt suspicious of the weighting scores, which had been set with Indo-European languages. Having the checklists did make it possible to check that cross-language scores were more or less similar. Wilds believed that the ratings were in fact based on the judge's interpretation of the full definitions rather than on the statistical computation of the checklist.

The checklist and the definitions served as part of the training process. As Wilds put it, "It might be said here that successful interpretation [of the scale] depends not only on the perceptiveness of the examiner but at least as much on the thoroughness of his training and the degree to which he accepts the traditional meaning of every part of the definition" (1975, p. 32). Wilds reported further that teams varied in their practice. In some teams, only one gave a rating and the second agreed or disagreed; in others, each voted separately; in others, further testing followed disagreement on a preliminary vote. In all cases of lack of final consensus, the general rule was for the lower rating to stand, it being felt that overrating had more serious consequences for the service.

The system was quickly accepted for personnel decisions, and the number of complaints about it declined, Sollenberger noted. In fact, Wilds drew attention to the effectiveness of the complaints:

> Most of the troublesome elements have by now been removed or made tolerable by the necessity of facing them repeatedly. The articulate anger of a Foreign Service Officer who feels his career threatened by a low rating is enough to make those who give such a rating aware that they must be able to defend it, and the occasional but vigorous complaints, especially in the early years, have done much to shape and refine the product. (Wilds 1975, p. 33)

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[2] When the Central Intelligence Agency adapted the technique later, the rating was different. Each examiner independently made a mark on a segmented five-inch line; the lengths were measured and the rating based on the average.

There remained problems: the issue of the acceptability of social dialects other than the standard, the problem of varying standards among examiners, the problem of obtaining a good sample of the examinee's proficiency. To deal with these problems, more elaborate training procedures, with libraries of typical testing interviews, were developed (Wilds 1975, p. 34).

The most important point to make is that the test was intended for internal use by a government agency that had clear notions of the relevant weights it wished to place on the various functional skills that were described. The development and spread of the technology to other testing contexts made sense only if this domain-specificity were kept in mind, and modified as appropriate. This, of course, was part of the problem with the translation of the scale into general guidelines for American foreign language teaching, with its assumption of some possibility of uniformity, and even more seriously, the attempt to develop a single examining technique based on the guidelines.[3]

It follows that I welcome the opportunity provided by Brian North's (1992) fascinating and ingenious attempt to develop a single scale of proficiency for a European language framework to argue that such a scale is fundamentally flawed. While its adoption and use might be bureaucratically desirable, it would have no basis either in psychometric theory or in psycholinguistic or sociolinguistic understanding of the complex nature of second language proficiency: the kind of scale proposed would be unreal and unscientific, and a dangerous substitute for the more complex sets of descriptions that are in fact needed.

8. SAY SOMETHING POSITIVE, PLEASE

What this paper has attempted to show are the limitations that must be faced in using tests and examinations as part of a National Foreign Language Policy. Starting at the end, there are serious questions about any expectation that an examination or test will be an appropriate or effective method of implementing a policy. As I recently heard Gregory Anrig, the president of Educational Testing Service, remark at a Brookings Institution seminar on national standards and tests, to attempt to drive education with a test is dangerous driving. We are in fact enfeebled and our strength is impaired when we rely on the "encroaching power" of examinations to substitute for all the complex and expensive and time-consuming efforts that have to go into the implementation of an educational curriculum.

Second, the tests that will be useful for checking the qualifications of the language users envisioned in a national plan will need to based on the complex criteria that describe their various skills. The ranking of these components will be externally rather theoretically imposed (it is a political or ideological rather than a pedagogical choice to rank speaking higher or lower than writing, or to determine the importance to be given to informal or formal styles of language). There are plenty of effective techniques available to test all the various skills that we may be interested in. And we should by now understand enough about the misleading phantom of high correlations between various tests.

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[3] For further discussion of this, see Spolsky 1986.

Let me remind you about this, starting with a paper presented at the important 1953 Georgetown Roundtable. In one of the papers in a symposium on testing organized by John Carroll, Thibault (1953) aimed to sum up "a few of the things that the Educational Testing Service has learned about foreign language testing." Basically, she found that "we seem to know how to put together impeccable tests ... but we do not know why it is that they work" (p. 22). Rather than setting out the results of studies that had been published or describing the "common sense" basis for the "knack" of item writing, she planned to present some questions to which answers were not known. The first question concerned the homogeneity of items in language tests: language tests produced biserial *r*'s "that are the envy and admiration of my colleagues in other subject-matter areas" (p. 22). The good side of this was the absence of the ambiguities in items that produced low *r*'s; the puzzle was the implication that "people who can do one kind of linguistic task can do other kinds as well" (p. 23). Thibault found this hard to believe. She noted that even when the proportion of vocabulary was reduced, or when items using more colloquial language were introduced, the measures of internal consistency remained high. Changes in comprehension items from word- to sentence-level items produced no change, and English-to-foreign vocabulary items provided the same information as foreign-to-English items, and both were the same as the grammar and reading sections.

The trouble must be, since one cannot believe the apparent implications of those high biserial *r*'s, that our statistical techniques are too crude to allow us to draw any conclusion other than that we have highly homogeneous tests. What seems to be needed, before we can make significant improvements in our tests in the way of weighting various aspects of language learning in an equitable way, is a series of detailed factorial studies that would tell us what aspects are differentiable, and would give us a clearer idea of the common factor that obscures everything by bringing about uniformly high *r*'s (Thibault 1953, p. 25).

Lacking a solution to this problem, Thibault went on to discuss other issues more amenable to solution, such as better face validity and better methods of selecting distractors. A wise choice, for as a brilliant new study by Henning (1992) has shown, psychometric techniques do not permit us to solve the dimensionality problem. The unitary hypothesis is a statistical illusion that has led many of us astray.

Only multiple measures can overcome the "unavoidable uncertainty" of the measurement of human capacities, and while the bureaucrat and the industrial psychometrist would prefer us to make these multiple measures of a single performance or of discrete items, sane testing principles call rather for varied and repeated assessment of the many skills that form the basis for a National Foreign Language Policy.

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SECTION V

TRANSNATIONAL PLANNING

THE INTEGRATION OF EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE POLICIES: THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY'S LINGUA PROGRAM

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Intention

The intention of this paper is to provide information on the background, organization, and functioning of the European Community's LINGUA Program, as an example of the interface between national foreign language policies and transnational action programs.[1]

1.2. Outline of Paper

The paper begins (section 2) with a consideration of the institutional context within which LINGUA and similar programs are developed and implemented, and the implications concerning the relationship between common and national policies. Section 3 considers the ways of handling discrepancies and potential problems. This is followed by a more detailed exposition of the LINGUA Program itself (section 4), including a consideration of the individual "actions" of which it consists. In order to provide examples of the "interface" between the two levels of policy (international and national), some of the implications of individual actions at the national level are considered (section 5), and general conclusions are drawn (section 6).

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[1] For readers who may not be fully familiar with European institutions, it should be stressed that the European Community, with its parliament in Strasbourg and its commission (or "Civil Service") in Brussels, is quite distinct from and independent of the Council of Europe, which has had a highly influential program in the field of foreign language teaching and learning since the late 1960s.

2. THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

2.1. Subsidiarity

The most basic concept governing the functioning of European Community (EC) institutions and action is that of *subsidiarity*, namely, that nothing should be done centrally that can be done better at national, regional, or local levels. It should also be clearly understood that EC programs must be agreed upon by ministers representing the twelve member states.

2.2. Value Added

When discussing subsidiarity, one cannot ignore the idea of *value added*, which is in a way its converse. In connection with EC action, we need to ask what it is adding to national action. In the case of LINGUA the answer involves three main elements:

- making directly available to teachers and students the cultural environment and contemporary varieties of the languages they are concerned with
- sharing the expertise developed by different member states in various aspects of foreign language teaching and learning
- giving those concerned in language teaching and learning the invaluable experience of working closely with other Europeans and using their languages

It might also be added that without the EC initiative itself it is unlikely that most individual member states would do much to promote the teaching of the "least widely taught languages."

2.3. The Decision Process

Thus, the LINGUA Program was drafted initially by the commission, in consultation with a wide range of people, and also gained the support of the European Parliament, but it had to be finally agreed upon by the council (involving ministers of education in particular). The council decision is dated July 28, 1989.[2] Since education as such is not included in the Treaty of Rome, the program is based on Article 128, relating to vocational training, and Article 235, which rules that any action not specifically provided for in the treaty can be taken, provided that there is unanimity. In effect this means that both the policies and the actions in the LINGUA Program were unanimously agreed upon by all twelve member states.

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[2] Ref. 89/489/EEC, in *Official Journal of the European Communities*, no. 1, 239/24.

2.4. EC and National Policies

In a situation like this it would be surprising if there were not certain initial discrepancies between declared *common* policies and the existing *national*—or in some cases regional or local—policies, curricula, and practices in individual member states. The assumption is that these would be adjusted following the adoption of the program.

2.5. Uniformization or Diversity?

The considerations mentioned above do not, however, imply a uniformization or even necessarily a harmonization of national or regional language policies. Indeed, the preamble to the decision emphasizes that "it is appropriate to help to promote the implementation of the national policies of the Member States concerning foreign language training without affecting the characteristics of their education and training systems." Common action is possible between partners with widely differing institutions, systems, and policies. The commitment implied in the decision is not to uniformize systems, but to carry out a joint program of action for common goals.

This may nonetheless involve resolving contradictions and conflicts between the policies of individual member states and those jointly agreed upon, and endeavoring to remove obstacles to the implementation of the action itself. The likelihood that a degree of voluntary convergence in certain respects may result from the program is, of course, undeniable. But the "preservation of the linguistic diversity and cultural wealth of Europe" is an explicit aim of the program, and indeed of the EC as a whole, and member states see much of what is in their diverse educational systems as part of the "cultural wealth" referred to.

3. MEANS OF ADJUSTMENT

3.1. Institutions

In addition to the "natural" process of adjustment referred to above, LINGUA itself involves an institutionalized structure designed to facilitate the smooth operation of the program. Figure 1 gives an indication of how this works, and a brief description follows.

3.2. Responsibilities

The main responsibility for the program lies with the commission's "Task Force for Human Resources" and Bureau LINGUA (its "technical assistance unit" for the program). The LINGUA Committee—consisting of representatives of individual member states and meeting two or three times a year under the chairmanship of the commission—advises the commission on political issues and provides the main

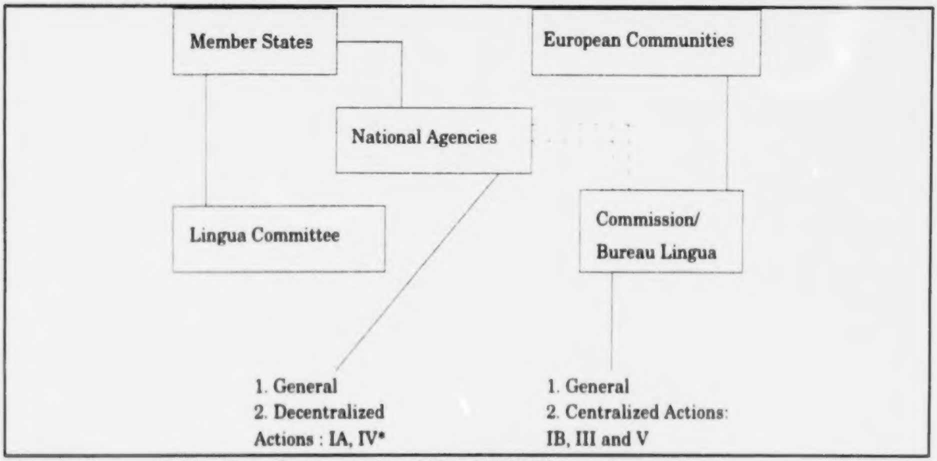
Member States
European Communities
National Agencies
Lingua Committee
Commission/
Bureau Lingua
1. General
2. Decentralized
Actions : IA, IV*
1. General
2. Centralized Actions:
IB, III and V

Figure 1. **Institutional structure of the LINGUA program.**

channel for communication with national governments. The National Agencies, which also meet with the commission bilaterally as well as collectively several times a year, have operational responsibility at the national level for promotion, information, and support relating to the program as a whole, as well as a major responsibility for the administration of the "decentralized Actions." The commission and Bureau LINGUA, in addition to their general responsibility mentioned above, are directly responsible for the administration of Actions IB, III, and V.

3.3. Channels of Communication

Thus, there are a number of channels for facilitating necessary adjustments:

- Political questions involving the interpretation of the program are channeled through the LINGUA Committee.
- Operational questions are discussed with the National Agencies.
- Where action by member states is necessary, operational questions may also be channeled through the LINGUA Committee.

4. CONTENT OF THE PROGRAM

The decision provides for a five-year program, with a proposed overall budget of approximately 200 million Ecus, each year's budget having to be approved by the European Parliament.

4.1. General Objectives

The objective of the program is to seek the "quantitative and qualitative improvement of foreign language teaching and learning within the Community," with a view toward removing obstacles to "the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital" as well as "preserving the linguistic diversity and cultural wealth of Europe."

4.2. Target Languages and Other Priorities

Diversification of the range of languages offered is an important part of this objective. Target languages are the official languages of the EC (Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish), together with Irish and Letzeburgesch.

A major priority is that of "encouraging competence in the least widely used and least taught foreign languages," and consideration is "given to the role of the different languages of the Community in the world at large in terms of their economic, commercial and cultural significance." Another important priority is the promotion of innovation in foreign language teaching.[3]

4.3. Individual Actions of LINGUA

The activities of LINGUA are divided into five main "actions," each with a different target group, as follows:

- Action I: practicing foreign language teachers
- Action II: future teachers of foreign languages and other students of foreign languages in higher education
- Action III: economic life
- Action IV: students in vocational education
- Action V: general

Details of the activities involved follow.

4.3.1. Action I.

Action I of LINGUA has two parts. The first part (IA) provides grants to help teachers participate in in-service training activities in the country of the language they teach

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[3] All quotations from preamble and Articles 5 and 6 of the decision.

(within the EC). The main aim is to improve their knowledge of the language and culture, to update it, and in some cases to improve their methodology. The in-service activity need not always be a course; in some cases it may be an attachment to a school or a different kind of institution.

The second part (IB) is concerned with building transnational links between in-service training institutions, and with helping them cooperate to develop curricula and materials for better and more innovative in-service programs and to further the programs through exchanges of staff. This is very much in accord with the principle of transnational cooperation between teachers and teacher trainers, with the accent on reciprocity. These links are called European cooperation programs, or ECPs. Here, and in Action IV as well, each member state has produced a list of institutions and bodies that are eligible for this action. This list can be found in the *Applicants' Guide.*

4.3.2. Action II.

Action II is concerned with higher education. It involves first and foremost an attempt to enable future teachers of foreign languages to study for three months to one year in the country of one of the languages they will teach. This also contributes to the teaching of foreign languages in the schools.

Another important category covered by this action is students who are doing a joint course, whereby they pursue their main subject with a very substantial foreign language element integrated into the course and the examinations. This is the ideal opportunity for giving the right kind of preparation to the kind of "bridge" people mentioned earlier. Unless students are planning to become teachers of foreign languages or interpreters or translators, it is probably much better for most of them to do this kind of course with an integral part of their study carried out in the country of their language.

LINGUA also supports the establishment of transnational links between institutions of higher education, and the above exchanges should normally take place in the context of such links.

4.3.3. Action III.

Action III is perhaps the most complex of all. It aims to encourage the learning of foreign languages by those working in "economic life," and in particular the owners and employees of small and medium-sized enterprises, and also by trade unions and local government personnel.

Action III works not by subsidizing language courses directly, but rather by funding the development of techniques for needs analyses, and by supporting the development of curricula and teaching and testing materials. It also supports mobility for those concerned with language training in economic life, to enable them to exchange ideas and experience with their opposite numbers in other member states and to prepare Action III projects.

An important feature of Action III is its insistence on the development of materials appropriate to the special circumstances of people working in economic life, who are often unable to attend regular classes. Thus, the stress is on innovation and the use of new technology and more flexible delivery systems, involving distance learning, computer-assisted learning, interactive video, satellite communications, and so on.

There must also normally be a transnational partnership, including a partner from a country where the target language is spoken. The partnership should also include partners from economic life or very closely involved with it.

4.3.4. Action IV.

Action IV is aimed at students in "professional, technical and vocational education." Its objective is to begin to change traditional apathetic or negative attitudes toward language learning among these groups by attempting to motivate students of foreign languages and to help them develop some communicative skills.

In the past, many exchanges of groups of students have failed to bring about real contact because no real cooperative activity has been built into them. LINGUA Action IV tries to remedy this by building the exchange itself into a program by which students of two or more institutions jointly develop a project, first through correspondence and other forms of communication, then through preparation in their own institutions, and finally through direct cooperation during the exchange and follow-up afterward.

As with the ECPs (Action IB), preparatory visits can also be funded, and it is suggested that they be carried out whenever possible. Here again each member state has produced a list of institutions that are eligible for this action.

Projects so far have included a much-quoted joint project to develop and build a piece of furniture, and another to help young people survive in a foreign country, thus helping them overcome their basic fear of "abroad." Experience has been encouraging and has suggested that such projects can really contribute to a change of attitude toward both language learning and foreign countries.

4.3.5. Action V.

Action V provides two main kinds of support. First (Action VA) it supports the activities of associations and consortia, and second (VB) it assists with the development of teaching materials for "lesser-taught languages," and occasionally for other languages in relation to new purposes that would not be funded under Action III (e.g. innovative materials for French and English at the primary school level).

Action VA is concerned with enabling associations and consortia to expand their activities on a European level, or to carry out activities in support of the LINGUA Program itself, or to provide a forum for the discussion of matters relating to the teaching of foreign languages. It should, however, be understood that its purpose is not to fund the regular activities of such associations and consortia, but rather to support special initiatives with a specific purpose and a useful product.

Action VB needs little further explanation, except to stress that it would normally fund not the development of materials for which there is a wide and obvious commercial market, but rather the development of materials that might not otherwise be produced. It has already begun to support projects on most of the lesser-taught languages, including both basic teaching materials and such vital tools of learning as dictionaries between languages where these did not previously exist.

As with other actions, a transnational partnership is essential. In the case of Action VA the association or consortium must be active in at least four member states, and in the case of Action VB there should be partners in more than one member state, including a partner in a country where each of the languages is spoken.

5. IMPLICATIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

In general, the governments of individual member states play a vital part in determining the success of the program through the quality and resources of the LINGUA National Agencies they set up, and to whose funding they also contribute. Their language policies and bureaucratic arrangements relating to the teaching and learning of foreign languages are part of the context within which the program must function, and they can be a major force for the success or failure of the program.

In the ensuing paragraphs we briefly mention some of the implications of each action.

5.1. Action I (In-Service Teacher Training)

Both parts (IA and IB) involve institutions concerned with in-service teacher training designated by individual member states. The priority of "least widely taught languages" depends on those being taught in the member state concerned. In selecting teachers for Action IA, National Agencies must take national priorities into account. The implementation of IA also means that teachers need to be released, and in some cases given additional help, by their own member state.

5.2. Action II (Preservice Teacher Training/ Higher Education)

Again, the priority of "least widely taught languages" depends on these being available for study in institutions of higher education, either as a main subject or as part of a joint course.

5.3. Action III (Language Learning in Economic Life)

In some member states the provision of foreign language teaching for those in economic life is not an area in which the authorities are much involved. However, this action is greatly facilitated where legislation compels employers to spend a certain percentage of profits on training, or where governments actively support institutions that carry out language audits and/or training. Government programs designed to stimulate awareness of the need for foreign language learning, or to actively promote LINGUA in economic life or in specific sectors, are also an asset.

5.4. Action IV (Vocational Education)

Here it is clearly important that the lists of establishments designated as "eligible" in each member state permit institutions in one country to find comparable partners in another. Other factors are the regulations governing the organization of excursions in term time or during holidays, the release and replacement of teachers, supplementary support to participants, and so on. Certain types of vocational training may also leave little room for the kind of project preparation and follow-up envisaged in this action.

5.5. Action VA (Activities of Associations and Consortia)

Here the main way in which member state governments may be concerned is through support for LINGUA promotion activities funded from this action. It is, however, obvious that government-funded institutions may be involved in other activities under VA (e.g. in the case of a project to set up a transnational association for directors of university language centers).

5.6. Action VB (General-Purpose Materials)

Here various kinds of government-funded institutions may be involved (e.g. adult education, universities, national television organizations, and so on). But it is highly unlikely that there would be any incompatibility between a LINGUA project in this area and national policies.

6. CONCLUSIONS

LINGUA is a relatively new program, and actual activities have not been in progress long enough for any valid judgment to be made on the extent to which its main objectives are being achieved. However, the conclusion to the first (1991) LINGUA *Activity Report* (appended to this paper) gives some idea as to what has already been achieved. Many of the early problems have been (or are being) solved. Discussions are already under way to enable proposals to be drawn up for a second five-year program.

What is clear is that the idea of formulating and implementing a common foreign language policy and a program of joint action for a group of nations such as the EC has been shown to be feasible, and there seems to be no reason why the ideas should not be adapted, though obviously with modifications, to the needs of other geographical areas such as the United States.

APPENDIX A: THE INTEGRATION OF COMMON AND NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE POLICIES: THE LINGUA PROGRAMME OF THE EC--A CASE STUDY

Summarising the LINGUA Recipe

- a juridical basis for the Decision
- a clear *policy* agreed to by all
- a programme of *action* compatible with the current policies, institutions and curricula of members: need for *subsidiarity* and *value added*
- a set of *institutions and machinery* for dialogue and problem-solving

Adaptation

- analyse *goals, needs, and problems* to determine *objectives*
- locate and tackle the problem of *awareness of need*
- extent to which *target cultures are available* (internally? externally? both?)
- locating *expertise,* and how to *share it* (common activities?)
- agree a *policy and a programme of action* acceptable to all participants
- determine what action should be *centrally* administered and what should be *locally/nationally* managed
- evolve appropriate *institutions and machinery* for managing the programme, including *monitoring and evaluation*

APPENDIX B: CONCLUSION TO FIRST (1991) LINGUA ACTIVITY REPORT

Added Value of the LINGUA Programme

The LINGUA Programme was designed to complement the policies of the Member States in the spirit of Article 5 of the Decision.

An added value to the activities already going on in the Member States is created by projects under Actions III and V, by the "LINGUA school exchanges" under Action IV and by the periods of in-service training and study periods under Actions I and II.

Probably, without LINGUA:

- transnational networks for the in-service training of language teachers would not have been set up
- a large number of language teachers would not have been able to go abroad to improve their linguistic and pedagogical competence
- thousands of students and school-children would not have benefited from a period of study in a foreign country
- practically none of the projects aiming at the production of didactic materials, at the analysis of language needs in various areas and sectors of the Community, or at the setting-up of a consistent and transparent "certification framework" would ever have been started

LINGUA also plays an important complementary part in the implementation of other Community actions involving the mobility of European citizens by helping to provide them with the means to communicate in the languages spoken in the host countries.

However, the pre-requisite for the successful operation of subsidiarity in the LINGUA Programme with respect to national educational policies is the full commitment of the Member States to the spirit of Article 5 of the Decision, particularly a commitment to:

- encourage all citizens to acquire a working knowledge of at least two foreign languages
- increase the existing opportunities for teaching and learning foreign languages
- promote competence, if only at "survival level" to begin with, in the least widely used and least taught languages
- increase the opportunities for teachers and trainers to reap the benefits of in-service training abroad

The LINGUA Programme, because of its very nature, depends greatly on national contributions. Experience has shown that the countries where the Programme works best are those where efficient LINGUA structures have been set up and where adequate human and financial resources have been allocated to those structures by the national authorities.

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